

Śrīla Prabhupāda - līlāmṛta

Satswarupa das Goswami

- 1: Childhood
- 2: College, Marriage, and Gandhi's Movement
- 3: "A Very Nice Saintly Person"
- 4: "How Shall I Serve you?"
- 5: The War
- 6: An Unknown Friend
- 7: Jhansi: The League of Devotees
- 8: New Delhi—"Crying Alone in the Wilderness"
- 9: A Resident of Vṛndāvana
- 10: "This Momentous Hour of Need"
- 11: The Dream Come True
- 12: The Journey to America
- 13: Butler, Pennsylvania
- The First Testing Ground
- 14: Struggling Alone
- 15: "It Will Not Be Possible to Assist You"
- 16: Free to Preach

- 17: On the Bowery
- 18: Breaking Ground
- 19: Planting the Seed
- 20: Stay High Forever
- 21: Beyond the Lower East Side
- 22: "Swami Invites the Hippies"
- 23: The Price Affair
- 24: New Jagannātha Purī
- 25: "Our Master Has Not Finished His Work"
- 26: Swamiji's Departure
- 27: India Revisited: Part 1
- 28: India Revisited: Part 2
- 29: Unlimited Opportunity, Limited Time
- 30: London: A Dream Fulfilled
- 31: A Threat Against ISKCON
- 32: India: Dancing White Elephants
- 33: A Lot of Ground to Be Covered
- 34: Jet-Age Parivrājakācārya
- 35: "This Remote Corner Of the World"
- 36: In Every Town and Village
- 37: The Land Is Yours
- 38: No One Listens to a Poor Man
- 39: I Will Build a Wonderful Temple for You

40: Around the World but Absorbed in Bombay

41: The Battle for Bombay

42: Developing Māyāpur

43: Beginning the Temple of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma

44: Let There Be a Temple

45: Please Distribute Books

46: Preaching to America: Part 1

47: Preaching to America: Part 2

48: At Home in India

49: India Unifying ISKCON

50: The Lamé Man and the Blind Man

51: Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and Fight

52: "I Have Done My Part"

53: Krishna's Great Soldier

54: At Home in Vrindavana

55: The Final Lesson

56: Return to America

--> Volume 7 - Extra's

57: Opening a Temple in Los Angeles

58: A Visit to Boston

59: A Summer in Montreal

60: Seattle

SPL 1: Childhood

CHAPTER ONE

Childhood

We would be sleeping, and father would be doing āraṭi. Ding ding ding—we would hear the bell and wake up and see him bowing down before Kṛṣṇa.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

It was Janmāṣṭamī, the annual celebration of the advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Some five thousand years before. Residents of Calcutta, mostly Bengalis and other Indians, but also many Muslims and even some British, were observing the festive day, moving here and there through the city's streets to visit the temples of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Devout Vaiṣṇavas, fasting until midnight, chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa and heard about the birth and activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. They continued fasting, chanting, and worshipping throughout the night.

The next day (September 1, 1896), in a little house in the Tollygunge suburb of Calcutta, a male child was born. Since he was born on Nandotsava, the day Kṛṣṇa's father, Nanda Mahārāja, had observed a festival in honor of Kṛṣṇa's birth, the boy's uncle called him Nandulal. But his father, Gour Mohan De, and his mother, Rajani, named him Abhay Charan, "one who is fearless, having taken shelter at Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet." In accordance with Bengali tradition, the mother had gone to the home of her parents for the delivery, and so it was that on the bank of the Ādi Gaṅgā, a few miles from his father's home, in a small two-room, mud-walled house with a tiled roof, underneath a jackfruit tree, Abhay Charan was born. A few days later, Abhay returned with his parents to their home at 151 Harrison Road.

An astrologer did a horoscope for the child, and the family was made jubilant by the auspicious reading. The astrologer made a specific prediction: When this child reached the age of seventy, he would cross the ocean, become a great exponent of religion, and open 108 temples.

* * *

Abhay Charan De was born into an India dominated by Victorian imperialism. Calcutta was the capital of India, the seat of the viceroy, the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, and the "second city" of the British Empire. Europeans and Indians lived separately, although in business and education they intermingled. The British lived mostly in central Calcutta, amidst their own theaters, racetracks, cricket fields, and fine European buildings. The Indians lived more in north Calcutta. Here the men dressed in dhotīs and the women in sārīs and, while remaining loyal to the British Crown, followed their traditional religion and culture.

Abhay's home at 151 Harrison Road was in the Indian section of north Calcutta. Abhay's father, Gour Mohan De, was a cloth merchant of moderate income and belonged to the aristocratic suvarṇa-varṇik merchant community. He was related, however, to the wealthy Mullik family, which for hundreds of years had traded in gold and salt with the British. Originally the Mulliks had been members of the De family, a gotra (lineage) that traces back to the ancient sage Gautama; but during the Mogul period of pre-British India a Muslim ruler had conferred the title Mullik ("lord")

on a wealthy, influential branch of the Des. Then, several generations later, a daughter of the Des had married into the Mullik family, and the two families had remained close ever since.

An entire block of properties on either side of Harrison Road belonged to Lokanath Mullik, and Gour Mohan and his family lived in a few rooms of a three-story building within the Mullik properties. Across the street from the Des' residence was a Rādhā-Govinda temple where for the past 150 years the Mulliks had maintained worship of the Deity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Various shops on the Mullik properties provided income for the Deity and for the priests conducting the worship. Every morning before breakfast, the Mullik family members would visit the temple to see the Deity of Rādhā-Govinda. They would offer cooked rice, kacaurīs, and vegetables on a large platter and would then distribute the prasādam to the Deities' morning visitors from the neighborhood.

Among the daily visitors was Abhay Charan, accompanying his mother, father, or servant.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I used to ride on the same perambulator with Siddhesvar Mullik. He used to call me Moti ("pearl"), and his nickname was Subidhi. And the servant pushed us together. If one day this friend did not see me, he would become mad. He would not go in the perambulator without me. We would not separate even for a moment.

* * *

As the servant pushed the baby carriage into the wide expanse of Harrison Road, timing his crossing between the bicycles and horse-drawn hackneys, the two children in the pram gazed up at the fair sky and tall trees across the road. Sounds and sights of the hackneys, with their large wheels spinning over the road, caught the fascinated attention of the two children. The servant steered the carriage towards the arched gateway within the red sandstone wall bordering the Rādhā-Govinda Mandira, and as Abhay and his friend rode underneath the ornate metal arch and into the courtyard, they saw high above them two stone lions, the heralds and protectors of the temple compound, their right paws extended.

In the courtyard was a circular drive, and on the oval lawn were lampposts with gaslights, and a statue of a young woman in robes. Sharply chirping sparrows flitted in the shrubs and trees or hopped across the grass, pausing to peck the ground, while choruses of pigeons cooed, sometimes abruptly flapping their wings overhead, sailing off to another perch or descending to the courtyard. Voices chattered as Bengalis moved to and fro, dressed in simple cotton sārīs and white dhotīs. Someone paused by the carriage to amuse the golden-skinned boys, with their shining dark eyes, but mostly people were passing by quickly, going into the temple.

The heavy double doors leading into the inner courtyard were open, and the servant eased the carriage wheels down a foot-deep step and proceeded through the foyer, then down another step and into the bright sunlight of the main courtyard. There they faced a stone statue of Garuḍa, perched on a four-foot column. This carrier of Viṣṇu, Garuḍa, half man and half bird, knelt on one knee, his hands folded prayerfully, his eagle's beak strong, and his wings poised behind him. The carriage moved ahead past two servants sweeping and washing the stone courtyard. It was just a few paces across the courtyard to the temple.

The temple area itself, open like a pavilion, was a raised platform with a stone roof supported by stout pillars fifteen feet tall. At the left end of the temple pavilion stood a crowd of worshipers, viewing the Deities on the altar. The servant pushed the carriage closer, lifted the two boys out, and then, holding their hands, escorted them reverentially before the Deities.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I can remember standing at the doorway of Rādhā-Govinda temple saying prayers to Rādhā-Govinda mūrti. I would watch for hours together. The Deity was so beautiful, with His slanted eyes.

Rādhā and Govinda, freshly bathed and dressed, now stood on Their silver throne amidst vases of fragrant flowers. Govinda was about eighteen inches high, and Rādhārāṇī, standing to His left, was slightly smaller. Both were golden. Rādhā and Govinda both stood in the same gracefully curved dancing pose, right leg bent at the knee and right foot placed in front of the left. Rādhārāṇī, dressed in a lustrous silk sārī, held up Her reddish right palm in benediction, and Kṛṣṇa, in His silk jacket and dhotī, played on a golden flute.

At Govinda's lotus feet were green tulasī leaves with pulp of sandalwood. Hanging around Their Lordships' necks and reaching down almost to Their lotus feet were several garlands of fragrant night-blooming jasmines, delicate, trumpetlike blossoms resting lightly on Rādhā and Govinda's divine forms. Their necklaces of gold, pearls, and diamonds shimmered. Rādhārāṇī's bracelets were of gold, and both She and Kṛṣṇa wore gold-embroidered silk cādars about Their shoulders. The flowers in Their hands and hair were small and delicate, and the silver crowns on Their heads were bedecked with jewels. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were slightly smiling.

Beautifully dressed, dancing on Their silver throne beneath a silver canopy and surrounded by flowers, to Abhay They appeared most attractive. Life outside, on Harrison Road and beyond, was forgotten. In the courtyard the birds went on chirping, and visitors came and went, but Abhay stood silently, absorbed in seeing the beautiful forms of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, the Supreme Lord and His eternal consort.

Then the kīrtana began, devotees chanting and playing on drums and karatālas. Abhay and his friend kept watching as the pūjārī offered incense, its curling smoke hanging in the air, then a flaming lamp, a conchshell, a handkerchief, flowers, a whisk, and a peacock fan. Finally the pūjārī blew the conchshell loudly, and the āratī ceremony was over.

* * *

When Abhay was one-and-a-half years old, he fell ill with typhoid. The family physician, Dr. Bose, prescribed chicken broth.

"No," Gour Mohan protested, "I cannot allow it."

"Yes, otherwise he will die."

"But we are not meat-eaters," Gour Mohan pleaded. "We cannot prepare chicken in our kitchen."

"Don't mind," Dr. Bose said. "I shall prepare it at my house and bring it in a jar, and you simply..."

Gour Mohan assented. "If it is necessary for my son to live." So the doctor came with his chicken broth and offered it to Abhay, who immediately began to vomit.

"All right," the doctor admitted. "Never mind, this is no good." Gour Mohan then threw the chicken broth away, and Abhay gradually recovered from the typhoid without having to eat meat.

On the roof of Abhay's maternal grandmother's house was a little garden with flowers, greenery, and trees. Along with the other grandchildren, two-year-old Abhay took pleasure in watering the plants with a sprinkling can. But his particular tendency was to sit alone amongst the plants. He would find a nice bush and make a sitting place.

One day when Abhay was three, he narrowly escaped a fatal burning. He was playing with matches in front of his house when he caught his cloth on fire. Suddenly a man appeared and put the fire out. Abhay was saved, although he retained a small scar on his leg.

In 1900, when Abhay was four, a vehement plague hit Calcutta. Dozens of people died every day, and thousands evacuated the city. When there seemed no way to check the plague, an old *bābājī* organized Hare Kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtana all over Calcutta. Regardless of religion, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Parsi all joined, and a large party of chanters traveled from street to street, door to door, chanting the names Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The group arrived at Gour Mohan's house at 151 Harrison Road, and Gour Mohan eagerly received them. Although Abhay was a little child, his head reaching only up to the knees of the chanters, he also joined in the dancing. Shortly after this, the plague subsided.

* * *

Gour Mohan was a pure Vaiṣṇava, and he raised his son to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Since his own parents had also been Vaiṣṇavas, Gour Mohan had never touched meat, fish, eggs, tea, or coffee. His complexion was fair and his disposition reserved. At night he would lock up his cloth shop, set a bowl of rice in the middle of the floor to satisfy the rats so that they would not chew the cloth in their hunger, and return home. There he would read from Caitanya-caritāmṛta and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the main scriptures of Bengali Vaiṣṇavas, chant on his japa beads, and worship the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was gentle and affectionate and would never punish Abhay. Even when obliged to correct him, Gour Mohan would first apologize: "You are my son, so now I must correct you. It is my duty. Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu's father would chastise Him, so don't mind."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: My father's income was no more than 250 rupees, but there was no question of need. In the mango season when we were children, we would run through the house playing, and we would grab mangoes as we were running through. And all through the day we would eat mangoes. We wouldn't have to think, "Can I have a mango?" My father always provided food—mangoes were one rupee a dozen.

Life was simple, but there was always plenty. We were middle class but receiving four or five guests daily. My father gave four daughters in marriage, and there was no difficulty for him. Maybe it was

not a very luxurious life, but there was no scarcity of food or shelter or cloth. Daily he purchased two and a half kilograms of milk. He did not like to purchase retail but would purchase a year's supply of coal by the cartload.

We were happy—not that because we did not purchase a motorcar we were unhappy. My father used to say, “God has ten hands. If He wants to take away from you, with two hands how much can you protest? And when He wants to give to you with ten hands, then with your two hands how much can you take?”

My father would rise a little late, around seven or eight. Then, after taking bath, he would go purchasing. Then, from ten o'clock to one in the afternoon, he was engaged in pūjā. Then he would take his lunch and go to business. And in the business shop he would take a little rest for one hour. He would come home from business at ten o'clock at night, and then again he would do pūjā. Actually, his real business was pūjā. For livelihood he did some business, but pūjā was his main business. We would be sleeping, and father would be doing āratī. Ding ding ding—we would hear the bell and wake up and see him bowing down before Kṛṣṇa.

Gour Mohan wanted Vaiṣṇava goals for his son; he wanted Abhay to become a servant of Rādhārāṇī, to become a preacher of the Bhāgavatam, and to learn the devotional art of playing mṛdaṅga. He regularly received sādhus in his home, and he would always ask them, “Please bless my son so that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī may be pleased with him and grant him Her blessings.”

Enjoying each other's company, father and son used to walk as far as ten miles, saving the five-paisa tram fare. On the beach they used to see a yogī who for years had sat in one spot without moving. One day the yogī's son was sitting there, and people had gathered around; the son was taking over his father's sitting place. Gour Mohan gave the yogīs a donation and asked their blessings for his son.

When Abhay's mother said she wanted him to become a British lawyer when he grew up (which meant he would have to go to London to study), one of the Mullik “uncles” thought it was a good idea. But Gour Mohan would not hear of it; if Abhay went to England he would be influenced by European dress and manners. “He will learn drinking and women-hunting,” Gour Mohan objected. “I do not want his money.”

From the beginning of Abhay's life, Gour Mohan had introduced his plan. He had hired a professional mṛdaṅga player to teach Abhay the standard rhythms for accompanying kīrtana. Rajani had been skeptical: “What is the purpose of teaching such a young child to play the mṛdaṅga? It is not important.” But Gour Mohan had his dream of a son who would grow up singing bhajanas, playing mṛdaṅga, and speaking on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

When Abhay sat to play the mṛdaṅga, even with his left and right arms extended as far as he could, his small hands would barely reach the drumheads at the opposite ends of the drum. With his right wrist he would flick his hand just as his teacher instructed, and his fingers would make a high-pitched sound—tee nee tee nee taw—and then he would strike the left drumhead with his open left hand—boom boom. With practice and age he was gradually learning the basic rhythms, and Gour Mohan looked on with pleasure.

Abhay was an acknowledged pet child of both his parents. In addition to his childhood names Moti, Nandulal, Nandu, and Kocha, his grandmother called him Kacaurī-mukhī because of his fondness for kacaurīs (spicy, vegetable-stuffed fried pastries, popular in Bengal). Both his grandmother and mother would give him kacaurīs, which he kept in the many pockets of his little vest. He liked to watch the vendors cooking on the busy roadside and accept kacaurīs from them and from the neighbors, until all the inside and outside pockets of his vest were filled.

Sometimes when Abhay demanded that his mother make him kacaurīs, she would refuse. Once she even sent him to bed. When Gour Mohan came home and asked, "Where is Abhay?" Rajani explained how he had been too demanding and she had sent him to bed without kacaurīs. "No, we should make them for him," his father replied, and he woke Abhay and personally cooked purīs and kacaurīs for him. Gour Mohan was always lenient with Abhay and careful to see that his son got whatever he wanted. When Gour Mohan returned home at night, it was his practice to take a little puffed rice, and Abhay would also sometimes sit with his father, eating puffed rice.

Once, at a cost of six rupees, Gour Mohan bought Abhay a pair of shoes imported from England. And each year, through a friend who traveled back and forth from Kashmir, Gour Mohan would present his son a Kashmiri shawl with a fancy, hand-sewn border.

One day in the market, Abhay saw a toy gun he wanted. His father said no, and Abhay started to cry. "All right, all right," Gour Mohan said, and he bought the gun. Then Abhay wanted another gun. "You already have one," his father said. "Why do you want another one?"

"One for each hand," Abhay cried, and he lay down in the street, kicking his feet. When Gour Mohan agreed to get the second gun, Abhay was pacified.

Abhay's mother, Rajani, was thirty years old when he was born. Like her husband, she came from a long-established Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava family. She was darker-skinned than her husband, and whereas his disposition was cool, hers tended to be fiery. Abhay saw his mother and father living together peacefully; no deep marital conflict or complicated dissatisfaction ever threatened home. Rajani was chaste and religious-minded, a model housewife in the traditional Vedic sense, dedicated to caring for her husband and children. Abhay observed his mother's simple and touching attempts to insure, by prayers, by vows, and even by rituals, that he continue to live. Whenever he was to go out even to play, his mother, after dressing him, would put a drop of saliva on her finger and touch it to his forehead. Abhay never knew the significance of this act, but because she was his mother he stood submissively "like a dog with its master" while she did it.

Like Gour Mohan, Rajani treated Abhay as the pet child; but whereas her husband expressed his love through leniency and plans for his son's spiritual success, she expressed hers through attempts to safeguard Abhay from all danger, disease, and death. She once offered blood from her breast to one of the demigods with the supplication that Abhay be protected on all sides from danger.

At Abhay's birth, she had made a vow to eat with her left hand until the day her son would notice and ask her why she was eating with the wrong hand. One day, when little Abhay actually asked, she immediately stopped. It had been just another prescription for his survival, for she thought that by the strength of her vow he would continue to grow, at least until he asked her about the vow. Had he not asked, she would never again have eaten with her right hand, and according to her superstition he would have gone on living, protected by her vow.

For his protection she also put an iron bangle around his leg. His playmates asked him what it was, and Abhay self-consciously went to his mother and demanded, "Open this bangle!" When she said, "I will do it later," he began to cry, "No, now!" Once Abhay swallowed a watermelon seed, and his friends told him it would grow in his stomach into a watermelon. He ran to his mother, who assured him he didn't have to worry; she would say a mantra to protect him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Mother Yaśodā would chant mantras in the morning to protect Kṛṣṇa from all dangers throughout the day. When Kṛṣṇa killed some demon she thought it was due to her chanting. My mother would do a similar thing with me.

His mother would often take him to the Ganges and personally bathe him. She also gave him a food supplement known as Horlicks. When he got dysentery, she cured it with hot purīs and fried eggplant with salt, though sometimes when he was ill Abhay would show his obstinacy by refusing to take any medicine. But just as he was stubborn, his mother was determined, and she would forcibly administer medicine into his mouth, though sometimes it took three assistants to hold him down.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I was very naughty when I was a boy. I would break anything. When I was angry, I would break the glass hookah pipes which my father kept to offer to guests. Once my mother was trying to bathe me, and I refused and knocked my head on the ground, and blood came out. They came running and said, "What are you doing? You shall kill the child."

Abhay was present when his mother observed the ceremony of Sādha-hotra during the seventh and ninth months of her pregnancies. Freshly bathed, she would appear in new clothing along with her children and enjoy a feast of whatever foods she desired, while her husband gave goods in charity to the local brāhmaṇas, who chanted mantras for the purification of the mother and the coming child.

Abhay was completely dependent on his mother. Sometimes she would put his shirt on backwards, and he would simply accept it without mentioning it. Although he was sometimes stubborn, he felt dependent on the guidance and reassurance of his mother. When he had to go to the privy, he would jump up and down beside her, holding her sārī and saying, "Urine, mother, urine."

"Who is stopping you?" she would ask. "Yes, you can go." Only then, with her permission, would he go.

Sometimes, in the intimacy of dependence, his mother became his foil. When he lost a baby tooth and on her advice placed it under a pillow that night, the tooth vanished, and some money appeared. Abhay gave the money to his mother for safekeeping, but later, when in their constant

association she opposed him, he demanded, "I want my money back! I will go away from home. Now you give me my money back!"

When Rajani wanted her hair braided, she would regularly ask her daughters. But if Abhay were present he would insist on braiding it himself and would create such a disturbance that they would give in to him. Once he painted the bottoms of his feet red, imitating the custom of women who painted their feet on festive occasions. His mother tried to dissuade him, saying it was not for children, but he insisted, "No, I must do it, also!"

Abhay was unwilling to go to school. "Why should I go?" he thought. "I will play all day." When his mother complained to Gour Mohan, Abhay, sure that his father would be affectionate, said, "No, I shall go tomorrow."

"All right, he will go tomorrow," said Gour Mohan. "That's all right." But the next morning Abhay complained that he was sick, and his father indulged him.

Rajani became upset because the boy would not go to school, and she hired a man for four rupees to escort him there. The man, whose name was Damodara, would tie Abhay about the waist with a rope—a customary treatment—take him to school, and present him before his teacher. When Abhay would try to run away, Damodara would pick him up and carry him in his arms. After being taken a few times by force, Abhay began to go on his own.

Abhay proved an attentive, well-behaved student, though sometimes he was naughty. Once when the teacher pulled his ear, Abhay threw a kerosene lantern to the floor, accidentally starting a fire.

In those days any common villager, even if illiterate, could recite from the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, or Bhāgavatam. Especially in the villages, everyone would assemble in the evening to hear from these scriptures. It was for this purpose that Abhay's family would sometimes go in the evening to his maternal uncle's house, about ten miles away, where they would assemble and hear about the Lord's transcendental pastimes. They would return home discussing and remembering them and then go to bed and dream Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, and Bhāgavatam.

After his afternoon rest and bath, Abhay would often go to a neighbor's house and look at the black-and-white pictures in Mahābhārata. His grandmother asked him daily to read Mahābhārata from a vernacular edition. Thus by looking at pictures and reading with his grandmother, Abhay imbibed Mahābhārata.

In Abhay's childhood play, his younger sister Bhavatarini was often his assistant. Together they would go to see the Rādhā-Govinda Deities in the Mulliks' temple. In their play, whenever they encountered obstacles, they would pray to God for help. "Please, Kṛṣṇa, help us fly this kite," they would call as they ran along trying to put their kite into flight.

Abhay's toys included two guns, a wind-up car, a cow that jumped when Abhay squeezed the rubber bulb attached, and a dog with a mechanism that made it dance. The toy dog was from Dr. Bose, the family physician, who gave it to him when treating a minor wound on Abhay's side.

Abhay sometimes liked to pretend that he was a doctor, and to his friends he would administer "medicine," which was nothing more than dust.

* * *

Abhay was enamored with the Ratha-yātrā festivals of Lord Jagannātha, held yearly in Calcutta. The biggest Calcutta Ratha-yātrā was the Mulliks', with three separate carts bearing the deities of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā. Beginning from the Rādhā-Govinda temple, the carts would proceed down Harrison Road for a short distance and then return. The Mulliks would distribute large quantities of Lord Jagannātha's prasādam to the public on this day.

Ratha-yātrā was held in cities all over India, but the original, gigantic Ratha-yātrā, attended each year by millions of pilgrims, took place three hundred miles south of Calcutta at Jagannātha Purī. For centuries at Purī, three wooden carts forty-five feet high had been towed by the crowds along the two-mile parade route, in commemoration of one of Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes. Abhay had heard how Lord Caitanya Himself, four hundred years before, had danced and led ecstatic chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa at the Purī Ratha-yātrā festival. Abhay would sometimes look at the railway timetable or ask about the fare to Vṛndāvana and Purī, thinking about how he would collect the money and go there.

Abhay wanted to have his own cart and to perform his own Ratha-yātrā, and naturally he turned to his father for help. Gour Mohan agreed, but there were difficulties. When he took his son to several carpenter shops, he found that he could not afford to have a cart made. On their way home, Abhay began crying, and an old Bengali woman approached and asked him what the matter was. Gour Mohan explained that the boy wanted a Ratha-yātrā cart but they couldn't afford to have one made. "Oh, I have a cart," the woman said, and she invited Gour Mohan and Abhay to her place and showed them the cart. It looked old, but it was still operable, and it was just the right size, about three feet high. Gour Mohan purchased it and helped to restore and decorate it. Father and son together constructed sixteen supporting columns and placed a canopy on top, resembling as closely as possible the ones on the big carts at Purī. They also attached the traditional wooden horse and driver to the front of the cart. Abhay insisted that it must look authentic. Gour Mohan bought paints, and Abhay personally painted the cart, copying the Purī originals. His enthusiasm was great, and he became an insistent organizer of various aspects of the festival. But when he tried making fireworks for the occasion from a book that gave illustrated descriptions of the process, Rajani intervened.

Abhay engaged his playmates in helping him, especially his sister Bhavatarini, and he became their natural leader. Responding to his entreaties, amused mothers in the neighborhood agreed to cook special preparations so that he could distribute the prasādam at his Ratha-yātrā festival.

Like the festival at Purī, Abhay's Ratha-yātrā ran for eight consecutive days. His family members gathered, and the neighborhood children joined in a procession, pulling the cart, playing drums and karatālas, and chanting. Wearing a dhotī and no shirt in the heat of summer, Abhay led the children in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and in singing the appropriate Bengali bhajana, Ki kara rāi kamalinī.

What are You doing, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī?

Please come out and see.

They are stealing Your dearmost treasure—

Kṛṣṇa, the black gem.

If the young girl only knew!

The young boy Kṛṣṇa,

Treasure of Her heart,

Is now forsaking Her.

Abhay copied whatever he had seen at adult religious functions, including dressing the deities, offering the deities food, offering āratī with a ghee lamp and incense, and making prostrated obeisances. From Harrison Road the procession entered the circular road inside the courtyard of the Rādhā-Govinda temple and stood awhile before the Deities. Seeing the fun, Gour Mohan's friends approached him: "Why haven't you invited us? You are holding a big ceremony, and you don't invite us? What is this?"

"They are just children playing," his father replied.

"Oh, children playing?" the men joked. "You are depriving us by saying that this is only for children?"

While Abhay was ecstatically absorbed in the Ratha-yātrā processions, Gour Mohan spent money for eight consecutive days, and Rajani cooked various dishes to offer, along with flowers, to Lord Jagannātha. Although everything Abhay did was imitation, his inspiration and steady drive for holding the festival were genuine. His spontaneous spirit sustained the eight-day children's festival, and each successive year brought a new festival, which Abhay would observe in the same way.

* * *

When Abhay was about six years old, he asked his father for a Deity of his own to worship. Since infancy he had watched his father doing pūjā at home and had been regularly seeing the worship of Rādhā-Govinda and thinking, "When will I be able to worship Kṛṣṇa like this?" On Abhay's request, his father purchased a pair of little Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities and gave Them to him. From then on, whatever Abhay ate he would first offer to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and imitating his father and the priests of Rādhā-Govinda, he would offer his Deities a ghee lamp and put Them to rest at night.

Abhay and his sister Bhavatarini became dedicated worshipers of the little Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, spending much of their time dressing and worshipping Them and sometimes singing bhajanās. Their brothers and sisters laughed, teasing Abhay and Bhavatarini by saying that because they were more

interested in the Deity than in their education they would not live long. But Abhay replied that they didn't care.

Once a neighbor asked Abhay's mother, "How old is your little son?"

"He's seven," she said, as Abhay listened with interest. He had never heard anyone discuss his age before; but now he understood for the first time: "I am seven."

In addition to the education Abhay received at the kindergarten to which he had at first been forcibly dragged, he also received private tutoring at home from his fifth year to his eighth. He learned to read Bengali and began learning Sanskrit. Then in 1904, when he was eight years old, Abhay entered the nearby Mutty Lall Seal Free School, on the corner of Harrison and Central roads.

Mutty Lall was a boys' school established in 1842 by a wealthy *suvarṇa-vaṇik* Vaiṣṇava. The building was stone, two stories, and surrounded by a stone wall. The teachers were Indian, and the students were Bengalis from local *suvarṇa-vaṇik* families. Dressed in their dhotīs and kurtās, the boys would leave their mothers and fathers in the morning and walk together in little groups, each boy carrying a few books and his tiffin. Inside the school compound, they would talk together and play until the clanging bell called them to their classes. The boys would enter the building, skipping through the halls, running up and down the stairs, coming out to the wide front veranda on the second floor, until their teachers gathered them all before their wooden desks and benches for lessons in math, science, history, geography, and their own Vaiṣṇava religion and culture.

Classes were disciplined and formal. Each long bench held four boys, who shared a common desk, with four inkwells. If a boy were naughty his teacher would order him to "stand up on the bench." A Bengali reader the boys studied was the well-known *Folk Tales of Bengal*, a collection of traditional Bengali folk tales, stories a grandmother would tell local children—tales of witches, ghosts, Tantric spirits, talking animals, saintly *brāhmaṇas* (or sometimes wicked ones), heroic warriors, thieves, princes, princesses, spiritual renunciation, and virtuous marriage.

In their daily walks to and from school, Abhay and his friends came to recognize, at least from their childish viewpoint, all the people who regularly appeared in the Calcutta streets; their British superiors traveling about, usually in horse-drawn carriages; the hackney drivers; the *bhaṅgīs*, who cleaned the streets with straw brooms; and even the local pickpockets and prostitutes who stood on the street corners.

Abhay turned ten the same year the rails were laid for the electric tram on Harrison Road. He watched the workers lay the tracks, and when he first saw the trolley car's rod touching the overhead wire, it amazed him. He daydreamed of getting a stick, touching the wire himself, and running along by electricity. Although electric power was new in Calcutta and not widespread (only the wealthy could afford it in their homes), along with the electric tram came new electric streetlights—carbon-arc lamps—replacing the old gaslights. Abhay and his friends used to go down the street looking on the ground for the old, used carbon tips, which the maintenance man would leave behind. When Abhay saw his first gramophone box, he thought an electric man or a ghost was inside the box singing.

Abhay liked to ride his bicycle down the busy Calcutta streets. Although when the soccer club had been formed at school he had requested the position of goalie so that he wouldn't have to run, he was an avid cyclist. A favorite ride was to go south towards Dalhousie Square, with its large fountains spraying water into the air. That was near Raj Bhavan, the viceroy's mansion, which Abhay could glimpse through the gates. Riding further south, he would pass through the open arches of the Maidan, Calcutta's main public park, with its beautiful green flat land spanning out towards Chowranghee and the stately buildings and trees of the British quarter. The park also had exciting places to cycle past: the racetrack, Fort William, the stadium. The Maidan bordered the Ganges (known locally as the Hooghly), and sometimes Abhay would cycle home along its shores. Here he saw numerous bathing ghāṭas, with stone steps leading down into the Ganges and often with temples at the top of the steps. There was the burning ghāṭa, where bodies were cremated, and, close to his home, a pontoon bridge that crossed the river into the city of Howrah.

At age twelve, though it made no deep impression on him, Abhay was initiated by a professional guru. The guru told him about his own master, a great yogī, who had once asked him, "What do you want to eat?"

Abhay's family guru had replied, "Fresh pomegranates from Afghanistan."

"All right," the yogī had replied. "Go into the next room." And there he had found a branch of pomegranates, ripe as if freshly taken from the tree. A yogī who came to see Abhay's father said that he had once sat down with his own master and touched him and had then been transported within moments to the city of Dvārakā by yogic power.

Gour Mohan did not have a high opinion of Bengal's growing number of so-called sādhus—the nondevotional impersonalist philosophers, the demigod worshipers, the gañjā smokers, the beggars—but he was so charitable that he would invite the charlatans into his home. Every day Abhay saw many so-called sādhus, as well as some who were genuine, coming to eat in his home as guests of his father, and from their words and activities Abhay became aware of many things, including the existence of yogic powers. At a circus he and his father once saw a yogī tied up hand and foot and put into a bag. The bag was sealed and put into a box, which was then locked and sealed, but still the man came out. Abhay, however, did not give these things much importance compared with the devotional activities his father had taught him, his worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and his observance of Ratha-yātrā.

* * *

Hindus and Muslims lived peacefully together in Calcutta, and it was not unusual for them to attend one another's social and religious functions. They had their differences, but there had always been harmony. So when trouble started, Abhay's family understood it to be due to political agitation by the British. Abhay was about thirteen years old when the first Hindu-Muslim riot broke out. He did not understand exactly what it was, but somehow he found himself in the middle of it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: All around our neighborhood on Harrison Road were Muhammadans. The Mullik house and our house were respectable; otherwise, it was surrounded by what is called kasbā and bastī. So the riot was there, and I had gone to play. I did not know that the riot had taken place

in Market Square. I was coming home, and one of my class friends said, "Don't go to your house. That side is rioting now."

We lived in the Muhammadan quarter, and the fighting between the two parties was going on. But I thought maybe it was something like two *gunḍās* [hoodlums] fighting. I had seen one *gunḍā* once stabbing another *gunḍā*, and I had seen pickpockets. They were our neighbor-men. So I thought it was like that: this is going on.

But when I came to the crossing of Harrison Road and Holliday Street I saw one shop being plundered. I was only a child, a boy. I thought, "What is this happening?" In the meantime, my family, my father and mother, were at home frightened, thinking, "The child has not come." They became so disturbed they came out of the home expecting, "Wherefrom the child will come?"

So what could I do? When I saw the rioting I began to run towards our house, and one Muhammadan, he wanted to kill me. He took his knife and actually ran after me. But I passed somehow or other. I was saved. So as I came running before our gate, my parents got back their life.

So without speaking anything I went to the bedroom, and it was in the winter. So without saying anything, I laid down, wrapped myself with a quilt. Then later I was rising from bed, questioning, "Is it ended? The riot has ended?"

* * *

When Abhay was fifteen he was afflicted with beriberi, and his mother, who was also stricken regularly had to rub a powder of calcium chloride on his legs to reduce the swelling. Abhay soon recovered, and his mother, who had never stopped any of her duties, also recovered.

But only a year later, at the age of forty-six, his mother suddenly died. Her passing away was an abrupt lowering of the curtain, ending the scenes of his tender childhood: his mother's affectionate care, her prayers and mantras for his protection, her feeding and grooming him, her dutifully scolding him. Her passing affected his sisters even more than him, though it certainly turned him more towards the affectionate care of his father. He was already sixteen, but now he was forced to grow up and prepare to enter on his own into worldly responsibilities.

His father gave him solace. He instructed Abhay that there was nothing for which to lament: the soul is eternal, and everything happens by the will of Kṛṣṇa, so he should have faith and depend upon Kṛṣṇa. Abhay listened and understood.

SPL 2: College, Marriage, and Gandhi's Movement

CHAPTER TWO

College, Marriage, and Gandhi's Movement

I joined Gandhi's movement in 1920 and gave up my education. Although I had passed my final examination—B.A.—I gave it up and did not appear.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

In 1914 the war came, and many Indians enlisted in the fight on behalf of their ruler, Great Britain. Abhay saw British airplanes landing on the racetrack in Maidan Park, and the newspaper told him of the war, but he was not directly affected. In 1916 he began college.

There were two prestigious colleges in Calcutta: Presidency and Scottish Churches'. Abhay entered Scottish Churches' College. It was a Christian school but well reputed amongst the Bengalis, and many Vaiṣṇava families sent their sons there. The professors, most of whom were priests in the Church of Scotland, were known as sober, moral men, and the students received a good education. It was a proper and respectable institution, and since it was in north Calcutta and not far from Harrison Road, Gour Mohan could keep Abhay at home.

Gour Mohan had long ago decided that he would not allow Abhay to go to London and in the name of education become exposed to the corruption of the West. He wanted Abhay to be a pure devotee of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Yet on the other hand, Gour Mohan didn't want to give up his son to become the brahmacārī disciple of a guru. Where was such a qualified guru to be found? His experience of yogīs and swamis had not inspired such confidence. He wanted his son to keep all the principles of spiritual life, yet he also knew that Abhay would have to marry and earn a livelihood. Under the circumstances, enrolling Abhay in Scottish Churches' College was the most protection Gour Mohan knew to give his son.

The college had been founded by the Reverend Alexander Duff, a Christian missionary who had gone to Calcutta in 1830. A pioneer in getting Indians to appreciate European civilization, the Reverend A. Duff had first founded the General Assembly Institution, for "propagation of the gospel through education, at once liberal and religious, on Western principles and with English as the medium of instruction in the higher classes." Later he had founded the College of the Church of Scotland and in 1908 had amalgamated both institutions as Scottish Churches' College.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We respected our professors as our fathers. The relationship between the students and the professors was very good. The vice-chancellor, Professor W. S. Urquhart, was a perfect and kindhearted gentleman, with whom we sometimes joked.

In my first year I studied English and Sanskrit, in my second year Sanskrit and philosophy. Then philosophy and economics. Another professor was J. C. Scrimgeour. He was professor of English literature. While teaching English literature he would give parallel passages from Bankim Chandra Chatterji. "Yes, yes," he would say, "your Bankim Bābū says like this." He had studied Bankim's literatures, and he compared Bankim Chandra Chatterji to Walter Scott. In those days, Dickens and Sir Walter Scott were two very great English literary men. So he taught us those novelists, and the relationship was very nice.

Abhay became a member of the English Society and would recite Keats, Shelley, and other poets to his classmates. As a member of the Sanskrit Society, he recited the Gītā, and some of his fellow students especially noted how eloquently he recited the Eleventh Chapter, describing the universal form of Kṛṣṇa. He also played soccer and took part in theatrics.

Amritlal Bose, a famous organizer and director of theater in Bengal, rehearsed Abhay and a group of his classmates in a drama from the life of Lord Caitanya. Since Caitanya lilā was available in the public theater for half a rupee, Mr. Bose argued, what was the need for an amateur production? And his answer was, "They should appreciate your performance of Lord Caitanya so much that after seeing it they will agree never to sin."

The eminent director was volunteering his service and training these boys, but on one condition: they would not perform publicly unless he said the production was perfect. For more than a year, Abhay and the others rehearsed the Caitanya play, until finally their director allowed them to stage a public performance. Abhay, playing the part of Advaita Ācārya, noticed that many people in the audience were crying. At first he could not understand why, but then he realized that because the players had been well trained and because they were sincere, the audience was moved. That was Abhay's first and last dramatic performance.

Abhay's psychology teacher, Professor Urquhart, gave evidence that woman's brain weighed less than man's. His economics professor lectured on Marshall's theory that family affection is the impetus for economic development. In Sanskrit Abhay used a text by Rowe and Webb that described Sanskrit as the mother of all languages.

While studying Kālidāsa's Kumāra-sambhava in Sanskrit, Abhay was impressed by Kālidāsa's explanation of the word dhīra, which means "undisturbed," or "self-controlled." According to Kālidāsa, once long ago Lord Śiva was sitting in deep meditation. Because the demigods were at war with the demons, they wanted a commander in chief born from the semen of Lord Śiva, so the demigods sent a beautiful young girl, Pārvatī, to interrupt his meditation. Although Pārvatī worshiped Lord Śiva and even touched his genitals, he was not disturbed. His resistance to temptation was the perfect example of being dhīra.

As at other British-run schools in India, all the European teachers at Scottish Churches' had to learn the local language. Once Professor Urquhart walked past Abhay and a group of students as they were eating some peanuts and talking together. One of the students, speaking in Bengali, made a joke at Professor Urquhart's expense. To their surprise, Professor Urquhart immediately turned to the jokester and answered in Bengali, and Abhay and the others felt ashamed.

Bible study was compulsory. The Bible Society had issued each student a beautifully bound Bible, and each morning everyone gathered for scripture reading, prayers, and hymns.

One of the professors criticized the Vedic teachings of karma and transmigration of the soul. In a court of law one cannot be prosecuted for a crime unless there is a witness. Similarly, he argued, although according to Hindus the soul suffers in his present life for the misdeeds of his past life, where is the witness to these misdeeds? Abhay was displeased to hear this criticism, and he knew how to refute it, but being only a student he had remained silent. Socially he was inferior, and a student had little scope to challenge a professor. But he knew that the professor's argument against karma was insubstantial; he knew there was a witness.

Some of the students, having come to Calcutta from small villages, viewed the big city and the presence of so many Europeans with bewilderment and timidity. But to Abhay, Calcutta and the British were not alarming, and he even held a certain fondness for his Scottish teachers. Although he looked up to them with a mixture of awe, distance, and some tension, he admired their moral uprightness and their gentlemanly, courteous behavior with the boys. They seemed to him kindhearted.

The governor of Bengal, who was Scottish, once came to Scottish Churches' College, visiting all the classrooms. The rooms were large, holding 150 students, but Abhay had a front-row seat and got a close look at the famous governor, the Marquis of Zetland.

The school operated on the principle of strict social distance between Europeans and Indians. Even the Bengali faculty members, being of a supposedly inferior race, had to use a faculty lounge separate from that of the European professors. Part of the college syllabus was England's Work in India, by M. Ghosh, an Indian. The book elaborately explained how India had been primitive before the British rule. Abhay's economics professor would sometimes shout at his class when he became frustrated with their slowness. Addressing them as representatives of the whole Indian nation, he would say, "You should never expect independence! You cannot rule! You can only work like asses, that's all!"

College life was demanding. No longer was Abhay free to spend hours before the Deities of Rādhā and Govinda early in the morning. That had been a boyhood luxury, when he would daily pass hours in the Mulliks' temple before the golden forms of Rādhā-Govinda, watching the pūjārīs as they worshiped the Deities with incense, flowers, lamps, musical kīrtana, and opulent prasādam. As a child he had played within the grassy compound of the temple or watched the men cooking kacaurīs on the roadside or bicycled or flown his kite with Bhavatarini. His life had always centered on his home at Harrison Road, his mother's talks, his father's worshiping Kṛṣṇa. These scenes were now past.

Now he spent his days within the compound of Scottish Churches' College. Here there was also a lawn and a garden with birds and even a small banyan tree. But instead of worship, there was study. The atmosphere at Scottish Churches' was academic, and even the casual conversation among the students as they gathered before the notice boards at the main entrance or passed in groups in and out of the main gates was usually about class assignments or collegiate activities.

When Abhay was not actually sitting side by side with his fellow students, sharing a classroom bench before one of the long desks that stood row after row in the lecture hall, when he was not looking attentively forward during the lecture of one of his professors—usually a reverend dressed in a European suit, speaking a Scottish brogue and pronouncing words like duty as "juty"—when he was not actually in the classroom hearing their lectures on Western logic or chemistry or psychology, then he was at his homework assignments, sitting at a table amidst the bookshelves in the college library, reading from an open book or writing notes while the electric fans overhead rippled the pages, or he was at home with his father, sisters, and brothers, but reading his lessons

or writing a paper for the reverend in the lecture hall. He had had to abandon worshipping the Kṛṣṇa Deity he had demanded his father give him years before; he had retired his Deities to a closed box.

Gour Mohan was undisturbed that his pet son could no longer attend to all the devotional activities of his childhood. He saw that Abhay was remaining pure in all his habits, that he was not adopting Western ideas or challenging his own culture, and that as a student at Scottish Churches' College he would not likely be exposed to immoral behavior. Gour Mohan was satisfied to see Abhay getting a good education to prepare for a career after graduation. He would be a responsible Vaiṣṇava; he would soon marry and get a job.

One of Abhay's classmates and close companions was Rupendranatha Mitra. Abhay and Rupen would study together and sit side by side in the assembly hall during Bible class, uttering the compulsory prayers. Rupen noticed that although Abhay was a serious student, he was never enamored of Western education or ambitious for scholastic achievements. Abhay would confide to Rupen, "I don't like these things," and sometimes he spoke of moving away. "What are you thinking?" Rupen would ask, and Abhay would reveal his mind. Rupen found that Abhay was always thinking about "something religious, something philosophical or devotional about God."

Abhay studied the Western philosophers and scientists, yet they held no fascination for him. After all, they were only speculating, and their conclusions were not in the devotional mood and spirit of the Vaiṣṇava training he had received from his father and the Vedic scriptures. The sudden access to the wealth of Western knowledge, which created in some an appetite to study deeply and in others a desire to get ahead in the world through good grades and career, left Abhay untouched. Certainly within his heart he was always thinking of "something religious, something philosophical or devotional about God," and yet, as a Scottish Churches' College man, he gave his time and attention to academic life.

One night, after his first year of college, Abhay had an unusual dream. The Deity of Kṛṣṇa his father had given him appeared to Abhay complaining, "Why have you put Me away in this box? You should take Me out and worship Me again." Abhay felt sorry that he had neglected his Deity, and he resumed his worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa at home, despite his assignments.

* * *

In the class one year ahead of Abhay was a very spirited nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose. He had been a student at Presidency College but had been expelled for organizing a student strike against a British professor who had repeatedly abused Indian students. At Scottish Churches', Bose appeared to be a serious student; he was secretary of the Philosophy Club and was working cooperatively with Vice-Chancellor Urquhart. From Subhas Bose and others, Abhay heard talks of Indian independence. He heard the names well known in his native Bengal: Bipinchandra Pal, who had fought to repeal the Arms Act; Surendranatha Bannerjee, who startled the British with his agitation against the 1905 partition of Bengal; Lala Lajpat Rai; and, most notably, Mohandas K. Gandhi.

Scottish Churches' College was strict in forbidding antigovernment propaganda, but the students were sympathetic to the cause of home rule. Although there were no open signs of rebellion, students sometimes held nationalistic meetings in secret. When Subhas Chandra Bose urged the

students to support the Indian independence movement, Abhay listened. He liked Bose's faith in spirituality, his enthusiasm and determination. Abhay wasn't interested in political activity, but the ideals of the independence movement appealed to him.

Many Bengali speakers and writers expressed India's drive for independence (svarāj) as a spiritual movement. For the nationalists, political emancipation was analogous to the soul's liberation from material bondage. Abhay was interested in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth, a conviction he had imbibed from his father and maintained since his childhood, whereas Indian independence was a temporary, relative truth. But some of the leaders of svarāj, while admitting that the Vedic scriptures were indeed absolute, asserted that the original glory of Indian culture could not shine forth for the world's benefit until India became free from the stigma of foreign rule. The foreigners, they pointed out, blasphemed and castigated the preeminence of India's culture.

Abhay had felt this also. In his assigned reading in M. Ghosh's *England's Work in India*, he had encountered the theory that the Vedic scriptures were impure, recent writings and that India's had been a spiritually backward culture before British rule and the spread of Christianity. There were many British insults against the śāstras—such as Abhay's professor's trying to discount the law of karma. But if India could gain national freedom, then everyone—not only Indians, but the entire world—could benefit from India's highly evolved Vedic culture.

The call to svarāj, although covert, attracted virtually all the students, and Abhay amongst them. He was especially interested in Gandhi. Gandhi always carried a Bhagavad-gītā; he daily read Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy words and spoke of being guided by the Gītā above all other books. Gandhi's personal habits were pure. He abstained from all intoxication, meat-eating, and illicit sex. He lived simply, like a sādhu, yet he seemed to have more integrity than the begging sādhus Abhay had seen so many times. Abhay read his speeches and followed his activities—maybe Gandhi could carry spirituality into the field of action. The Gītā's truth, Gandhi proclaimed, belonged in a most prominent place, where the Gītā not only could be read but could work for everyone's freedom. And the symbol of that freedom was svarāj.

Nationalist sympathies at Scottish Churches' College remained underground during Abhay's years as a student. It was a prestigious school. A student had to study very seriously to obtain a degree there, and he could then look forward to a fine career. To speak openly against British rule and in favor of independence meant to risk being expelled. To lose education and career—only the most rebellious would dare. So the students met undercover and listened to the revolutionary leaders: “We want svarāj! We want independence! Our own government! Our own schools!”

* * *

Gour Mohan watched his son with concern. He saw Abhay not as one of the hundreds of millions of instruments meant to change India's political destiny, but as his pet son. His first concern was for Abhay's welfare. While world events moved across the stage of history, Gour Mohan concentrated on his son's future as he hoped it would be and as he had always prayed it would be. He was planning for Abhay to become a pure Vaiṣṇava, a devotee of Rādhārāṇī. He had taught Abhay to worship Kṛṣṇa and be pure in character and had arranged for his education. Now Gour Mohan thought of getting him married.

According to the Vedic system, a marriage should be carefully arranged by the parents, and it should take place before the girl reaches puberty. Gour Mohan had gotten his first daughter married in her ninth year, his second daughter at twelve years, and his third daughter at eleven. When his second daughter was going on twelve, Rajani had said, "I shall go to the river and commit suicide if you don't get her married at once." In the Vedic system there was no courtship, nor was the couple allowed to live together during the first years of their marriage. The young girl would begin serving her husband by cooking for him at her parents' house and coming before him to serve him his meal or by taking part in some other formal exchange. Then as the boy and girl grew to physical maturity, they would become so lovable to one another that they would be inseparable. The girl would naturally remain faithful to her husband since she would have no association with any other boy as she grew to puberty.

Gour Mohan had many friends in Calcutta with eligible young daughters, and for a long time he had been considering a suitable wife for Abhay. After careful consultation, he finally chose Radharani Datta, the daughter of a *suvarṇa-vāṇik* family associated with the Mulliks. Radharani was eleven years old. After the meeting between her father and Gour Mohan, both families agreed upon the marriage.

Although Abhay was a third-year college student with no income, it was not uncommon for a student to marry, and he would have no immediate financial responsibilities. Abhay didn't appreciate his father's choice of a wife—he had thought of marrying another girl—but in deference to his father he put aside his reluctance. For the time being, he was living with his family and she with hers; so his marital responsibilities of supporting a family would not be immediate. First he had to finish college.

During his fourth year at Scottish Churches', Abhay began to feel reluctant about accepting his degree. As a sympathizer to the nationalist cause, he preferred national schools and self-government over the British institutions, but he could see that as yet no such alternatives existed. Gandhi, however, was calling on Indian students to forsake their studies. The foreign-run schools, he said, instilled a slave mentality; they made one no more than a puppet in the hands of the British. Still, a college degree was the basis of a life's career. Abhay weighed the choices carefully.

Gour Mohan didn't want Abhay to do something he would later regret. He had always tried to plan the best for his son, but Abhay was twenty-three and would have to make this decision for himself. Gour Mohan thought of the future; the horoscope said his son would be a great religious preacher at age seventy, but Gour Mohan did not expect to live to see it. Still, he had every reason to accept the horoscope as accurate, and he wanted to prepare Abhay. He tried to plan things accordingly, but there was no way to guess what Kṛṣṇa would do. Everything depended on Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa was above nationalism, above planning and the laws of astrology, and above the desires of a modest cloth merchant aspiring to make his son a pure devotee of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and a preacher of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Although Gour Mohan had always allowed Abhay to do what he wanted, he had also carefully guided him always on the path he knew was best. Now, without interfering with Abhay's decision about college, Gour Mohan set about to arrange good employment for him, regardless of what else might happen.

In 1920 Abhay completed his fourth year of college and took the B.A. exam. Afterwards, with the ordeal of final examinations behind him, he took a short vacation. To fulfill a long-cherished desire, he traveled alone a day's journey by train to Jagannātha Purī.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Every day of my boyhood I used to think, "How to go to Jagannātha Purī?", and "How to go to Vṛndāvana?" At that time the fare was, for Vṛndāvana, four or five rupees, and similarly for Jagannātha Purī. So I was thinking, "When shall I go?" I took the first opportunity to go to Jagannātha Purī.

* * *

He walked along the same broad street where for thousands of years the Ratha-yātrā procession had passed. In the market, shops displayed small carved and painted wooden mūrtis of Lord Jagannātha. Although it was not Ratha-yātrā season, tourists were purchasing souvenirs, and in the temple they purchased Jagannātha prasādam. In the Jagannātha temple, fifty-six gigantic offerings of cooked rice and vegetables were presented daily in worship before the deities of Jagannātha, Balarāma, and Subhadrā.

Abhay entered the temple and saw the deities. On a side altar stood the mūrti of Lord Caitanya in His six-armed form, manifesting Himself simultaneously as Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, and the sannyāsī Lord Caitanya. Lord Caitanya was famous in Purī, where He had spent the last eighteen years of His life, conducting Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana with His followers and dancing ecstatically at the yearly Ratha-yātrā as the carts were wheeled along the main road, surrounded by thousands of devotees. Lord Caitanya had danced and swooned in the ecstasy of His intense love in separation from Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Passing over the parade route, Abhay recalled his own childhood pastimes—singing and dancing in the street, the miniature cart, the procession, Jagannātha smiling, his father and mother, Rādhā-Govinda. Somehow the fame of Lord Jagannātha had inspired him as a child, and it had remained within him all these years: "When shall I go to Jagannātha Purī?" His childhood dreaming of Purī and Vṛndāvana and his compulsively studying the train tables, scheming since the age of five to travel here, were based on more than just a desire to tour Purī's marketplace, and he was not satisfied by once seeing the Deity in the noisy, crowded temple. He had been impelled to come to Purī as a pilgrim, and his motive was his devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

Now nationalism was strongly influencing his life, and he had recently married and was facing the decisions of graduation and career. Yet here he was, hardly more than a boy, walking alone in Purī, where Lord Caitanya had lived and where Lord Kṛṣṇa's Jagannātha still resided. Abhay relished his break from the pressure of duties in Calcutta. He didn't know how the love he felt for Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's pilgrimage place would fit into his life. He knew that Kṛṣṇa was more important than anything else—He was God, the supreme controller, and everyone's inner guide. But there was so much token, superficial service to God. Even the nationalist speakers, although they carried the Gītā on their person, were more intent on nationalism than on Kṛṣṇa. Only those who were sincere devotees knew the importance and attraction of Kṛṣṇa—people like his father.

An odd incident occurred at Purī. Gour Mohan had given Abhay a letter of introduction to an acquaintance who lived in Jagannātha Purī. Abhay went to see him and was well received. When

the man was offering him lunch, however, Abhay noticed a small lump within one of the cooking pots. He questioned his host, who replied, "Oh, it is meat."

Abhay was unable to restrain his shock: "No! What is this! I have never taken meat." Abhay looked at his host in astonishment: "I never expected this at Jagannātha Purī."

Ashamed, his host said, "I did not know. I thought this was the best." Abhay pacified the man, but he put his food aside and took no more meals there. After that, Abhay ate only the Jagannātha prasādam from the temple.

Abhay stayed in Purī for three or four days, wandering around the holy places and visiting the famous Purī seaside, with its sparkling beach and strongly pounding surf. Several times he recognized some of the priests from the Jagannātha temple as they smoked cigarettes, and he heard of other unsavory activities of the sādhus connected with the temple. What kind of sādhus were these who ate fish with their Jagannātha prasādam and smoked? In this respect, he found Jagannātha Purī disappointing.

* * *

When Abhay returned home, he found his young wife crying. Then he heard how her friends had told her. "Your husband is not coming back." He told her not to worry, there was no truth in the story; he had only gone for a few days and was now back.

Although his marriage had only recently begun, Abhay was dissatisfied. Radharani Datta was an attractive young girl, but Abhay had never really liked her. He was thinking maybe a different wife would be better, a second wife besides this one. In India it was socially acceptable to marry a second wife, so Abhay decided to take the matter into his own hands; he made arrangements to approach the parents of another girl. But when his father heard about it, he called Abhay and said, "My dear boy, you are eager to take a second wife, but I would advise you not to. It is Kṛṣṇa's grace that your present wife is not to your liking. Take it as a great fortune. If you do not become too attached to your wife and family that will help you in your future advancement in spiritual life." Abhay accepted his father's advice; he wanted as obey his father, and he appreciated the saintly viewpoint. But he remained thoughtful, a bit awed by his father's forethought, and he wondered how one day in the future he would be advancing in spiritual life and be grateful that his father had done this. "Your future advancement in spiritual life"—Abhay liked the idea He reconciled himself to the wife he had been given.

* * *

Abhay Charan De's name was included on the posted list of students who had passed the B.A. exams and who were invited to appear for their diploma. But Abhay had decided he didn't want a diploma from Scottish Churches' College. Although as a graduate he would have a promising career, it would be a British-tainted career. If Gandhi succeeded, India would soon be rid of the British. Abhay had made his decision, and when graduation day arrived, the college authorities learned of his rejecting his diploma. In this way, Abhay registered his protest and signaled his response to Gandhi's call.

Gandhi's protest had increased its pitch in recent months. During the war, Indians had remained loyal to the Crown in hopes of generating British sympathy towards the cause of independence. But in 1919 England had passed the Rowlatt Act to repress the move for Indian freedom. Gandhi had then called on all Indians to observe a hartāl, a day in which people all over the country had stayed home from work and school in protest. Although it had been a nonviolent protest, one week later in Amritsar in the public square known as Jallianwalla Bagh, British soldiers shot to death hundreds of unarmed, defenseless Indians who had gathered for a peaceful meeting. Gandhi then lost all faith in the intentions of the empire towards India. Calling for complete noncooperation, he ordered a boycott of everything British—commodities, schools, courts, military honors. And Abhay, in refusing his degree, was moving to align himself more closely with Gandhi's independence movement.

But his heart was not in it. Just as he had never given his heart to college studies, to earning a degree, to his wife, so he was reserved about becoming a full-fledged nationalist. Abhay had become inclined towards the cause, but never really convinced. Now, out of school, out of work, caring little for his career, education, or wife, he remained at home. He tried his hand at writing poetry for the occasion of a friend's wedding. He read Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the latest speeches of Gandhi. He had no immediate plans.

* * *

Gour Mohan had his plans for Abhay, and the college degree had been an integral part of those plans. But Kṛṣṇa, it seemed, had other plans. The political protest of refusing the Bachelor of Arts degree was more a mark of honor than a social stigma, and Gour Mohan did not reproach his son for it. But Abhay still needed to take up some kind of work. Gour Mohan approached his friend Kartick Bose and asked him to employ Abhay.

Dr. Kartick Chandra Bose, an intimate friend, had been the family doctor since Abhay's childhood. He was a distinguished surgeon, a medical scholar, and a chemical industrialist. He had his own establishment, Bose's Laboratory, in Calcutta, where he manufactured drugs, soaps, and other products for the pharmaceutical industry. Dr. Bose was well known throughout India as the first Indian to manufacture pharmaceutical preparations that had formerly been monopolized by European firms. He agreed to accept Abhay as a department manager at his laboratory.

Although Abhay knew little of the pharmaceutical industry or of management, he felt confident that by reading a few related books he could learn what he needed to know. But when this new young man was suddenly given the post of department manager, several workers became dissatisfied. Some of them were elderly and had been forty years with the firm. They voiced their dissatisfaction amongst themselves and finally confronted Dr. Bose: Why had this young man been put in charge? Dr. Bose replied, "Oh, for that position I needed someone I could trust like my own son. He is signing checks for forty thousand rupees. I could only entrust the personal handling of my accounts in that department to him. His father and I are very close, and this young man is known to me practically as my son."

Gour Mohan felt he had done his best. His prayer was that the principles of pure Vaiṣṇavism he had taught his son would stay with him and guide him throughout his life. Gandhi and the cause of svarāj had disrupted Abhay's college career, and Abhay was still inclined towards nationalism, but not so much for a political motive as for a spiritual vision. So Gour Mohan was content. He knew the marriage arrangement was not pleasing to Abhay, but Abhay had accepted his explanation that detachment from wife and family affairs would be good for spiritual advancement. And Abhay was showing an inherent disinterest in materialistic affairs. This also did not displease Gour Mohan, to whom business had always been subservient to his worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He had expected this. Now Abhay had a promising job and would be making the best of his marriage. Gour Mohan had done what he could, and he depended on Kṛṣṇa for the ultimate result.

* * *

Gandhi, bolstered by his emergence as a leader among the Congress Party, now openly attacked the empire's exploitative cloth trade with India. England was purchasing raw cotton from India at the lowest prices, manufacturing it into cloth in the Lancashire mills in England, and then selling the monopolized cloth at high prices to the Indian millions. Gandhi's propaganda was that India should return to making her own cloth, using simple spinning wheels and handlooms, thus completely boycotting the British-made cloth and attacking an economic base of Britain's power over India. Traveling by train throughout the country, Gandhi repeatedly appealed to his countrymen to reject all foreign cloth and wear only the simple coarse khādī produced from India's own cottage industry. Before the British rule, India had spun and woven her own cloth. Gandhi argued that by breaking the cottage industries, the British were sinking the Indian masses into semistarvation and lifelessness.

To set the example, Gandhi himself worked daily at a primitive spinning wheel and wore only a simple, coarse loincloth and shawl. He would hold meetings and ask people to come forth and reject their imported cloth. On the spot, people would throw down heaps of cloth, and he would set it ablaze. Gandhi's wife complained that the khādī was too thick and not convenient to wear while cooking; she asked if while cooking she could wear the light, British-made cloth. "Yes, you're free to cook with your mill cloth on," Gandhi had told her, "but I must exercise a similar freedom by not taking the meal so prepared."

The cause of cottage industry appealed to Abhay. He, too, was not enamored with the modern industrial advances the British had introduced in India. Not only was simple living good for the long-term national economy of hundreds of millions of Indians, as Gandhi was emphasizing, but to Abhay it was also the way of life most conducive to spiritual culture. Abhay put aside his mill-manufactured cloth and took to wearing khādī. Now his dress revealed him to whomever he met, British and Indian alike. He was a nationalist, a sympathizer of revolution. To wear khādī in India in the early 1920s was not a mere clothing fad; it was a political statement. It meant he was a Gandhian.

SPL 3: "A Very Nice Saintly Person"

CHAPTER THREE

"A Very Nice Saintly Person"

There has not been, there will not be, such benefactors of the highest merit as [Chaitanya] Mahāprabhu and His devotees have been. The offer of other benefits is only a deception; it is rather a great harm, whereas the benefit done by Him and His followers is the truest and greatest eternal benefit. This benefit is not for one particular country, causing mischief to another; but it benefits the whole universe.

—Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī

Abhay's friend Narendranath Mullik was insistent. He wanted Abhay to see a sādhu from Māyāpur. Naren and some of his friends had already met the sādhu at his nearby āśrama on Ultadanga Junction Road, and now they wanted Abhay's opinion. Everyone within their circle of friends considered Abhay the leader, so if Naren could tell the others that Abhay also had a high regard for the sādhu, then that would confirm their own estimations. Abhay was reluctant to go, but Naren pressed him.

They stood talking amidst the passersby on the crowded early-evening street, as the traffic of horse-drawn hackneys, oxcarts, and occasional auto taxis and motor buses moved noisily on the road. Naren put his hand firmly around his friend's arm, trying to drag him forward, while Abhay smiled but stubbornly pulled the other way. Naren argued that since they were only a few blocks away, they should at least pay a short visit. Abhay laughed and asked to be excused. People could see that the two young men were friends, but it was a curious sight, the handsome young man dressed in white khādī kurtā and dhotī being pulled along by his friend.

Naren explained that the sādhu, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, was a Vaiṣṇava and a great devotee of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. One of his disciples, a sannyāsī, had visited the Mullik house and had invited them to meet Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. A few of the Mulliks had gone to see him and had been very much impressed.

But Abhay remained skeptical. "Oh, no! I know all these sādhus," he said. "I'm not going." Abhay had seen many sādhus in his childhood; every day his father had entertained at least three or four in his home. Some of them were no more than beggars, and some even smoked gañjā. Gour Mohan had been very liberal in allowing anyone who wore the saffron robes of a sannyāsī to come. But did it mean that though a man was no more than a beggar or gañjā smoker, he had to be considered saintly just because he dressed as a sannyāsī or was collecting funds in the name of building a monastery or could influence people with his speech?

No. By and large, they were a disappointing lot. Abhay had even seen a man in his neighborhood who was a beggar by occupation. In the morning, when others dressed in their work clothes and went to their jobs, this man would put on saffron cloth and go out to beg and in this way earn his livelihood. But was it fitting that such a so-called sādhu be paid a respectful visit, as if he were a guru?

Naren argued that he felt that this particular sādhu was a very learned scholar and that Abhay should at least meet him and judge for himself. Abhay wished that Naren would not behave this

way, but finally he could no longer refuse his friend. Together they walked past the Parsnath Jain Temple to 1 Ultadanga, with its sign, Bhaktivinod Asana, announcing it to be the quarters of the Gaudiya Math.

When they inquired at the door, a young man recognized Mr. Mullik—Naren had previously given a donation—and immediately escorted them up to the roof of the second floor and into the presence of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who was sitting and enjoying the early evening atmosphere with a few disciples and guests.

Sitting with his back very straight, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared tall. He was slender, his arms were long, and his complexion was fair and golden. He wore round bifocals with simple frames. His nose was sharp, his forehead broad, and his expression was very scholarly yet not at all timid. The vertical markings of Vaiṣṇava tilaka on his forehead were familiar to Abhay, as were the simple saṁnyāsa robes that draped over his right shoulder, leaving the other shoulder and half his chest bare. He wore tulasī neck beads, and the clay Vaiṣṇava markings of tilaka were visible at his throat, shoulder, and upper arms. A clean white brahminical thread was looped around his neck and draped across his chest. Abhay and Naren, having both been raised in Vaiṣṇava families, immediately offered prostrated obeisances at the sight of the revered saṁnyāsī.

While the two young men were still rising and preparing to sit, before any preliminary formalities of conversation had begun, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta immediately said to them, “You are educated young men. Why don't you preach Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's message throughout the whole world?”

Abhay could hardly believe what he had just heard. They had not even exchanged views, yet this sādhu was telling them what they should do. Sitting face to face with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Abhay was gathering his wits and trying to gain a comprehensible impression, but this person had already told them to become preachers and go all over the world!

Abhay was immediately impressed, but he wasn't going to drop his intelligent skepticism. After all, there were assumptions in what the sādhu had said. Abhay had already announced himself by his dress to be a follower of Gandhi, and he felt the impulse to raise an argument. Yet as he continued to listen to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta speak, he also began to feel won over by the sādhu's strength of conviction. He could sense that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta didn't care for anything but Lord Caitanya and that this was what made him great. This was why followers had gathered around him and why Abhay himself felt drawn, inspired, and humbled and wanted to hear more. But he felt obliged to make an argument—to test the truth.

Drawn irresistibly into discussion, Abhay spoke up in answer to the words Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had so tersely spoken in the first seconds of their meeting. “Who will hear your Caitanya's message?” Abhay queried. “We are a dependent country. First India must become independent. How can we spread Indian culture if we are under British rule?”

Abhay had not asked haughtily, just to be provocative, yet his question was clearly a challenge. If he were to take this sādhu's remark to them as a serious one—and there was nothing in Śrīla

Bhaktisiddhānta's demeanor to indicate that he had not been serious—Abhay felt compelled to question how he could propose such a thing while India was still dependent.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta replied in a quiet, deep voice that Kṛṣṇa consciousness didn't have to wait for a change in Indian politics, nor was it dependent on who ruled. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was so important—so exclusively important—that it could not wait.

Abhay was struck by his boldness. How could he say such a thing? The whole world of India beyond this little Ultadanga rooftop was in turmoil and seemed to support what Abhay had said. Many famous leaders of Bengal, many saints, even Gandhi himself, men who were educated and spiritually minded, all might very well have asked this same question, challenging this sādhu's relevancy. And yet he was dismissing everything and everyone as if they were of no consequence.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta continued: Whether one power or another ruled was a temporary situation; but the eternal reality is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the real self is the spirit soul. No man-made political system, therefore, could actually help humanity. This was the verdict of the Vedic scriptures and the line of spiritual masters. Although everyone is an eternal servant of God, when one takes himself to be the temporary body and regards the nation of his birth as worshipable, he comes under illusion. The leaders and followers of the world's political movements, including the movement for svarāj, were simply cultivating this illusion. Real welfare work, whether individual, social, or political, should help prepare a person for his next life and help him reestablish his eternal relationship with the Supreme.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had articulated these ideas many times before in his writings:

There has not been, there will not be, such benefactors of the highest merit as [Chaitanya] Mahāprabhu and His devotees have been. The offer of other benefits is only a deception; it is rather a great harm, whereas the benefit done by Him and His followers is the truest and greatest eternal benefit... This benefit is not for one particular country causing mischief to another; but it benefits the whole universe... The kindness that Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has shown to jivas absolves them eternally from all wants, from all inconveniences and from all the distresses... That kindness does not produce any evil, and the jivas who have it will not be the victims of the evils of the world. Verse" As Abhay listened attentively to the arguments of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, he recalled a Bengali poet who had written that even less advanced civilizations, like China and Japan, were independent and yet India labored under political oppression. Abhay knew well the philosophy of nationalism, which stressed that Indian independence had to come first. An oppressed people was a reality, the British slaughter of innocent citizens was a reality, and independence would benefit people. Spiritual life was a luxury that could be afforded only after independence. In the present times, the cause of national liberation from the British was the only relevant spiritual movement. The people's cause was in itself God.

Yet because Abhay had been raised a Vaiṣṇava, he appreciated what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was saying. Abhay had already concluded that this was certainly not just another questionable sādhu, and he perceived the truth in what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said. This sādhu wasn't concocting his own philosophy, and he wasn't simply proud or belligerent, even though he spoke in a way that

kicked out practically every other philosophy. He was speaking the eternal teachings of the Vedic literature and the sages, and Abhay loved to hear it.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, speaking sometimes in English and sometimes in Bengali, and sometimes quoting the Sanskrit verses of the Bhagavad-gītā, spoke of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the highest Vedic authority. In the Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa had declared that a person should give up whatever duty he considers religious and surrender unto Him, the Personality of Godhead (sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja). And the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam confirmed the same thing. Dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām: all other forms of religion are impure and should be thrown out, and only bhāgavata-dharma, performing one's duties to please the Supreme Lord, should remain. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's presentation was so cogent that anyone who accepted the śāstras would have to accept his conclusion.

The people were now faithless, said Bhaktisiddhānta, and therefore they no longer believed that devotional service could remove all anomalies, even on the political scene. He went on to criticize anyone who was ignorant of the soul and yet claimed to be a leader. He even cited names of contemporary leaders and pointed out their failures, and he emphasized the urgent need to render the highest good to humanity by educating people about the eternal soul and the soul's relation to Kṛṣṇa and devotional service.

Abhay had never forgotten the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His teachings in Bhagavad-gītā. And his family had always worshiped Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, whose mission Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was espousing. As these Gaudiya Math people worshiped Kṛṣṇa, he also had worshiped Kṛṣṇa throughout his life and had never forgotten Kṛṣṇa. But now he was astounded to hear the Vaiṣṇava philosophy presented so masterfully. Despite his involvement in college, marriage, the national movement, and other affairs, he had never forgotten Kṛṣṇa. But Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was now stirring up within him his original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and by the words of this spiritual master not only was he remembering Kṛṣṇa, but he felt his Kṛṣṇa consciousness being enhanced a thousand times, a million times. What had been unspoken in Abhay's boyhood, what had been vague in Jagannātha Purī, what he had been distracted from at college, what he had been protected in by his father now surged forth within Abhay in responsive feelings. And he wanted to keep it.

He felt himself defeated. But he liked it. He suddenly realized that he had never before been defeated. But this defeat was not a loss. It was an immense gain.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I was from a Vaiṣṇava family, so I could appreciate what he was preaching. Of course, he was speaking to everyone, but he found something in me. And I was convinced about his argument and mode of presentation. I was so much struck with wonder. I could understand: Here is the proper person who can give a real religious idea.

It was late. Abhay and Naren had been talking with him for more than two hours. One of the brahmachārīs gave them each a bit of prasādam in their open palms, and they rose gratefully and took their leave.

They walked down the stairs and onto the street. The night was dark. Here and there a light was burning, and there were some open shops. Abhay pondered in great satisfaction what he had just

heard. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's explanation of the independence movement as a temporary, incomplete cause had made a deep impression on him. He felt himself less a nationalist and more a follower of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He also thought that it would have been better if he were not married. This great personality was asking him to preach. He could have immediately joined, but he was married; and to leave his family would be an injustice.

Walking away from the āśrama, Naren turned to his friend: "So, Abhay, what was your impression? What do you think of him?"

"He's wonderful!" replied Abhay. "The message of Lord Caitanya is in the hands of a very expert person."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I accepted him as my spiritual master immediately. Not officially, but in my heart. I was thinking that I had met a very nice saintly person.

* * *

After his first meeting with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Abhay began to associate more with the Gaudiya Math devotees. They gave him books and told him the history of their spiritual master.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was one of ten children born to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, a great Vaiṣṇava teacher in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya Himself. Before the time of Bhaktivinoda, the teachings of Lord Caitanya had been obscured by teachers and sects falsely claiming to be followers of Lord Caitanya but deviating in various drastic ways from His pure teachings. The good reputation of Vaiṣṇavism had been compromised. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, however, through his prolific writings and through his social position as a high government officer, reestablished the respectability of Vaiṣṇavism. He preached that the teachings of Lord Caitanya were the highest form of theism and were intended not for a particular sect or religion or nation but for all the people of the world. He prophesied that Lord Caitanya's teachings would go worldwide, and he yearned for it.

The religion preached by [Chaitanya] Mahāprabhu is universal and not exclusive... The principle of kīrtan as the future church of the world invites all classes of men, without distinction of caste or clan, to the highest cultivation of the spirit. This church, it appears, will extend all over the world and take the place of all sectarian churches, which exclude outsiders from the precincts of the mosque, church, or temple.

Lord Chaitanya did not advent Himself to liberate only a few men of India. Rather, His main objective was to emancipate all living entities of all countries throughout the entire universe and preach the Eternal Religion. Lord Chaitanya says in the Chaitanya Bhagwat: "In every town, country, and village, My name will be sung." There is no doubt that this unquestionable order will come to pass... Although there is still no pure society of Vaiṣṇavas to be had, yet Lord Chaitanya's prophetic words will in a few days come true, I am sure. Why not? Nothing is absolutely pure in the beginning. From imperfection, purity will come about.

Oh, for that day when the fortunate English, French, Russian, German, and American people will take up banners, mridangas, and kartals and raise kirtan through their streets and towns. When will that day come?

As a prominent magistrate, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was a responsible government officer. He served also as superintendent of the temple of Lord Jagannātha and was the father of ten children. Yet in spite of these responsibilities, he served the cause of Kṛṣṇa with prodigious energy. After coming home from his office in the evening, taking his meals, and going to bed, he would sleep from eight until midnight and then get up and write until morning. He wrote more than one hundred books during his life, many of them in English. One of his important contributions, with the cooperation of Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī and Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, was to locate the exact birthplace of Lord Caitanya in Māyāpur, about sixty miles north of Calcutta.

While working to reform Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in India, he prayed to Lord Caitanya, "Your teachings have been much depreciated. It is not in my power to restore them." And he prayed for a son to help him in his preaching. When, on February 6, 1874, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was born to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in Jagannātha Purī, the Vaiṣṇavas considered him the answer to his father's prayers. He was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck and draped across his chest like the sacred thread worn by brāhmaṇas. His parents gave him the name Bimala Prasada.

When Bimala Prasada was six months old, the carts of the Jagannātha festival stopped at the gate of Bhaktivinoda's residence and for three days could not be moved. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's wife brought the infant onto the cart and approached the Deity of Lord Jagannātha. Spontaneously, the infant extended his arms and touched the feet of Lord Jagannātha and was immediately blessed with a garland that fell from the body of the Lord. When Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura learned that the Lord's garland had fallen onto his son, he realized that this was the son for whom he had prayed.

One day, when Bimala Prasada was still a child of no more than four years, his father mildly rebuked him for eating a mango not yet duly offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Bimala Prasada, although only a child, considered himself an offender to the Lord and vowed never to eat mangoes again. (This was a vow that he would follow throughout his life.) By the time Bimala Prasada was seven years old, he had memorized the entire Bhagavad-gītā and could even explain its verses. His father then began training him in proofreading and printing, in conjunction with the publishing of the Vaiṣṇava magazine Sajjana-toṣaṇī. With his father, he visited many holy places and heard discourses from the learned paṇḍitas.

As a student, Bimala Prasada preferred to read the books written by his father instead of the school texts. By the time he was twenty-five he had become well versed in Sanskrit, mathematics, and astronomy, and he had established himself as the author and publisher of many magazine articles and one book, Sūrya-siddhānta, for which he received the epithet Siddhānta Sarasvatī in recognition of his erudition. When he was twenty-six his father guided him to take initiation from a renounced Vaiṣṇava saint, Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, who advised him "to preach the Absolute Truth and keep aside all other works." Receiving the blessings of Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, Bimala Prasada (now Siddhānta Sarasvatī) resolved to dedicate his body, mind, and words to the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

In 1905 Siddhānta Sarasvatī took a vow to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra a billion times. Residing in Māyāpur in a grass hut near the birthplace of Lord Caitanya, he chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra day and night. He cooked rice once a day in an earthen pot and ate nothing more; he slept on the ground, and when the rainwater leaked through the grass ceiling, he sat beneath an umbrella, chanting.

In 1911, while his aging father was lying ill, Siddhānta Sarasvatī took up a challenge against pseudo Vaiṣṇavas who claimed that birth in their caste was the prerequisite for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The caste-conscious brāhmaṇa community had become incensed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's presentation of many scriptural proofs that anyone, regardless of birth, could become a brāhmaṇa Vaiṣṇava. These smārta brāhmaṇas, out to prove the inferiority of the Vaiṣṇavas, arranged a discussion. On behalf of his indisposed father, young Siddhānta Sarasvatī wrote an essay, "The Conclusive Difference Between the Brāhmaṇa and the Vaiṣṇava," and submitted it before his father. Despite his poor health, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was elated to hear the arguments that would soundly defeat the challenge of the smārtas.

Siddhānta Sarasvatī then traveled to Midnapore, where paṇḍitas from all over India had gathered for a three-day discussion. Some of the smārta paṇḍitas who spoke first claimed that anyone born in a śūdra family, even though initiated by a spiritual master, could never become purified and perform the brahminical duties of worshiping the Deity or initiating disciples. Finally, Siddhānta Sarasvatī delivered his speech. He began quoting Vedic references glorifying the brāhmaṇas, and at this the smārta scholars became very much pleased. But when he began discussing the actual qualifications for becoming a brāhmaṇa, the qualities of the Vaiṣṇavas, the relationship between the two, and who, according to the Vedic literature, is qualified to become a spiritual master and initiate disciples, then the joy of the Vaiṣṇava-haters disappeared. Siddhānta Sarasvatī conclusively proved from the scriptures that if one is born as a śūdra but exhibits the qualities of a brāhmaṇa, then he should be honored as a brāhmaṇa, despite his birth. And if one is born in a brāhmaṇa family but acts like a śūdra, then he is not a brāhmaṇa. After his speech, Siddhānta Sarasvatī was congratulated by the president of the conference, and thousands thronged around him. It was a victory for Vaiṣṇavism.

With the passing away of his father in 1914 and his spiritual master in 1915, Siddhānta Sarasvatī continued the mission of Lord Caitanya. He assumed editorship of Sajjana-toṣaṇī and established the Bhagwat Press in Krishnanagar. Then in 1918, in Māyāpur, he sat down before a picture of Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī and initiated himself into the sannyāsa order. At this time he assumed the sannyāsa title Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was dedicated to using the printing press as the best medium for large-scale distribution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He thought of the printing press as a bṛhat mṛdaṅga, a big mṛdaṅga. Although the mṛdaṅga drum had traditionally been used to accompany kīrtana, even during the time of Lord Caitanya, and although Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī himself led kīrtana parties and sent groups of devotees chanting in the streets and playing on the mṛdaṅgas, such kīrtanas could be heard only for a block or two. But with the bṛhat mṛdaṅga, the big mṛdaṅga drum of the printing press, the message of Lord Caitanya could be spread all over the world.

Most of the literature Abhay began reading had been printed on the Bhagwat Press, which Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had established in 1915. The Bhagwat Press had printed the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, with commentary by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the Bhagavad-gītā, with commentary by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and one after another, the works of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. This literature was the spiritual heritage coming from Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who had appeared almost five hundred years before.

Abhay had been a devotee of Lord Caitanya since childhood, and he was familiar with the life of Lord Caitanya through the well-known scriptures Caitanya-caritāmṛta and Caitanya-bhāgavata. He had learned of Lord Caitanya not only as the most ecstatic form of a pure devotee who had spread the chanting of the holy name to all parts of India, but also as the direct appearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself in the form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined. But now, for the first time, Abhay was in touch with the great wealth of literature compiled by the Lord's immediate associates and followers, passed down in disciplic succession, and expanded on by great authorities. Lord Caitanya's immediate followers— Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, and others—had compiled many volumes based on the Vedic scriptures and proving conclusively that Lord Caitanya's teachings were the essence of Vedic wisdom. There were many books not yet published, but Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was intent on establishing many presses, just to release the sound of the bṛhat mṛdaṅga for the benefit of all people.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was teaching the conclusion of Lord Caitanya's teachings, that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that the chanting of His holy name should be stressed above all other religious practices. In former ages, other methods of attaining to God had been available, but in the present Age of Kali only the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa would be effective. On the authority of the scriptures such as the Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa and the Upaniṣads, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had specifically cited the mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself had confirmed in Bhagavad-gītā that the only method of attaining Him was devotional service: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."

Abhay knew these verses, he knew the chanting, and he knew the conclusions of the Gītā. But now, as he eagerly read the writings of the great ācāryas, he had fresh realizations of the scope of Lord Caitanya's mission. Now he was discovering the depth of his own Vaiṣṇava heritage and its efficacy for bringing about the highest welfare for people in an age destined to be full of troubles.

* * *

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was often traveling, and Abhay was busy with his family and business, so to arrange another meeting was not possible. Yet from their first encounter Abhay had considered Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī his spiritual master, and Abhay began thinking of him always, "I have met such a nice saintly person." Whenever possible, Abhay would seek out Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's disciples, the members of the Gaudiya Math.

As for Gandhi's movement, Gandhi had suffered a bitter setback when his nonviolent followers had blundered and committed violence during a protest. The British had taken the opportunity to arrest

Gandhi and sentence him to six years in jail. Although his followers still revered him, the nationalist movement had lost much of its impetus. But regardless of that, Abhay was no longer interested. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had defeated his idea that the nationalist cause was India's first priority. He had invoked Abhay's original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and Abhay now felt confident that Bhaktisiddhānta's mission was the real priority. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had invited him to preach, and from that moment Abhay had wanted to join the Gaudiya Math as one of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's disciples. But now, instead of his political inclinations, it was his family obligations that stood in the way. He was no longer thinking, "First let us become an independent nation then preach about Lord Caitanya." Now he was thinking, "I cannot take part like the others. I have my family responsibilities."

And the family was growing. In 1921 Abhay and his wife had had their first child, a son. And there would be more children, and more income would be needed. Earning money meant sacrificing time and energy, and it meant, at least externally, being distracted from the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Indian culture had the highest regard for the family institution, and divorce was unheard of. Even if a man was in great financial difficulty, he would remain with his wife and children. Although Abhay expressed regret at not being a sannyāsī disciple in the Gaudiya Math, he never seriously considered leaving his young wife so early in their marriage. Gour Mohan was pleased to hear of his son's attraction to a Vaiṣṇava guru, but he never expected Abhay to abandon responsibilities and enter the renounced order. A Vaiṣṇava could remain with wife and family, practice spiritual life at home, and even become active in preaching. Abhay would have to find ways to serve the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as a family man.

Abhay thought that if he were to become very successful in business, then he could spend money not only to support his family but also to help support Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. An astrologer had even predicted that Abhay would become one of the wealthiest men in India. But with his present income he could do little more than provide for his family's needs. He thought he might do better by trying to develop a business on his own.

Abhay expressed his feelings to Dr. Bose, who listened like a sympathetic father and suggested that Abhay become his agent for all of northern India. Abhay could purchase medicines, liniments, rectified spirits, toothpastes, and other items wholesale from Dr. Bose's factory and travel widely throughout northern India, building up his own business. Also, Abhay had enough experience with Bose's Laboratory that he could try to make and market some of his own medicines and products. Dr. Bose and Abhay decided that the centrally located city of Allahabad would be a good place for Abhay to make his headquarters.

* * *

In 1923, Abhay and his wife and child moved to Allahabad, a twelve-hour train ride northwest from Calcutta. The British had once made Allahabad the capital of the United Provinces, and they had built many good buildings there, including buildings for a high court and a university. Europeans and affluent Indian families like the Nehrus lived in a modern, paved, well-lit section of town. There was also another, older section, with ancient narrow streets closely lined with buildings and shops. Many Bengalis resided there, and it was there that Abhay decided to settle his family.

He had chosen Allahabad, traditionally known as Prayāga, as a good location for business, but it was also one of India's most famous places of pilgrimage. Situated at the confluence of the three holiest rivers of India—the Ganges, the Yamunā, and the Sarasvatī—Allahabad was the site of two of India's most widely attended spiritual events, the annual Māgha-melā, and the Kumbha-melā, which took place every twelve years. And in search of spiritual purification, millions of pilgrims from all over India would converge here each year at the time of the full moon in the month of Māgha (January) and bathe at the junction of the three sacred rivers.

Abhay's home at 60 Badshahi Mundi consisted of a few rented rooms. For his business he rented a small shop in the commercial center of the city at Johnston Gung Road, where he opened his dispensary, Prayag Pharmacy, and began selling medicines, tinctures, syrups, and other products manufactured by Bose's Laboratory. He met an Allahabad physician, Dr. Ghosh, who was interested in a business partnership, so Abhay asked him to become his attending physician and move his office to Prayag Pharmacy. Dr. Ghosh consented and closed his own shop, Tropical Pharmacy.

At Prayag Pharmacy, Dr. Ghosh would diagnose patients and give medical prescriptions, which Abhay would fill. Dr. Ghosh would then receive a twenty-five-percent commission from the sale of the prescriptions. Abhay and Dr. Ghosh became friends; they would visit at each other's home, and they treated each other's children like their own family members. Often they discussed their aspirations for increasing profits.

Dr. Ghosh: Abhay was a business-minded man. We were all God-fearing, of course. In every home we have a small temple, and we must have Deities. But he used to always talk about business and how to meet family expenses.

Although at home Abhay wore a kurtā and dhotī, sometimes for business he would dress in shirt and pants. He was a good-looking, full-mustached, energetic young man in his late twenties. He and Radharani De now had two children—a daughter was born after they had been in Allahabad one year. Gour Mohan, who was now seventy-five, had come to live with him, as had Abhay's widowed sister, Rajesvari, and her son, Tulasi. Gour Mohan mostly stayed at home, chanted on his beads, and worshiped the śālagrāma-śilā Deity of Kṛṣṇa. He was satisfied that Abhay was doing right, and Abhay was satisfied to have his father living comfortably with him and freely worshiping Kṛṣṇa.

Abhay led a busy life. He was intent on building his business. By 8:00 A.M. he would go to his pharmacy, where he would meet Dr. Ghosh and begin his day's work. At noon he would come home, and then he would return to the pharmacy in the late afternoon. He had purchased a large Buick for eight thousand rupees, and although he never drove it himself, he let his nephew, a good driver, use it for his taxi business. Occasionally, Abhay would use the car on his own business excursions, and his nephew would then act as his chauffeur.

It so happened that both Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal were customers at Prayag Pharmacy. Because Jawaharlal would always order Western medicines, Abhay thought he must have felt that Indian ways were inferior. Once, Jawaharlal approached Abhay for a political contribution, and Abhay donated, being a conscientious merchant. During the day Abhay would talk with his customers and other friends who would stop by, and they would tell him many things. A former

military officer used to tell Abhay stories of World War I. He told how Marshal Foch in France had one day ordered the killing of thousands of Belgian refugees whose maintenance had become a burden to him on the battlefield. A Muhammadan gentleman, a member of a royal family in Afghanistan, would come daily with his son to sit and chat. Abhay would listen to his visitors and converse pleasantly and make up their prescriptions, but his thoughts kept returning to his meeting with Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He went over it again and again in his mind—how he had looked, his mannerisms, what he had said.

At night Abhay would go home to his wife and children. Radharani was a chaste and faithful wife who spent her days cooking, cleaning, and caring for her two children. But she was not inclined to share her husband's interest in things spiritual. He could not convey to her his feelings about Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

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Abhay; his wife; their two children; Gour Mohan; Abhay's younger brother, Krishna Charan; Abhay's widowed sister, Rajesvari; and her son, Tulasi das, all went together to an Allahabad studio for a family portrait. The photo shows Abhay in his late twenties. He is thin and dark, with a full mustache. His forehead is broad, his eyes dark and clear. He wears a white kurtā and dhotī and plain dark slippers. He sits in a chair, his wife standing behind him, an attractive young woman in a white khādī sārī with a line of color on the border. Her slim arm rests behind Abhay's head on the back of his chair, her small hand gripping the edge of the chair. Her left hand hangs by her side, gripped in a fist. She is barefoot. With his left hand, Abhay steadies his two-year-old boy, "Pacha" (Prayag Raj), a glaring infant, on his lap, the boy seeming to squirm, his baby legs and bare feet dangling by his mother's knee. Abhay seems a bit amused by the son on his lap. Abhay is a handsome Indian man, his wife an attractive woman, both young.

Also behind Abhay stands his nephew Tulasi and his brother, Krishna Charan. Sitting on the far right is Abhay's sister Rajesvari, dressed in a widow's white sārī, holding Sulakshmana, Abhay's daughter, on her lap. Sulakshmana is also squirming, her foot jutting towards the photographer. In the center sits Gour Mohan. His face is shriveled, and his whole body is emaciated with age. He is also wearing a white kurtā and dhotī. His hands seem to be moving actively on his lap, perhaps with palsy. He is short and small and old.

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Abhay traveled frequently throughout northern India, intent on expanding his sales. It was not unusual for him to be gone a few days in a week, and sometimes a week or more at a time, as he traveled from one city to another. The pharmaceutical industry was just beginning in India, and doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies were eager to buy from the competent, gentlemanly agent who called on them from Bose's Laboratory of Calcutta.

He would travel by train and stay in hotels. He liked the feeling of freedom from home that traveling afforded, but the real drive was servicing accounts and getting new ones; that was his business. Riding in a third-class unreserved compartment was often uncomfortable; the only seats were benches, which were often dirty, and passengers were permitted to crowd on without

reservations. But that is how Abhay traveled, hundreds of miles every week. As the train moved between towns, he would see the numberless small villages and then the country land that spread out before him on either side of the tracks. At every stop, he would hear the cries of the tea vendors as they walked alongside the train windows: “Chāy! Chāy!” Tea! The British had introduced it, and now millions of Indians were convinced that they could not get through the morning without their little glass of hot tea. As a strict Vaiṣṇava, Abhay never touched it, but his wife, much to his displeasure, was becoming a regular tea drinker.

Although Abhay was accustomed to dressing as a European businessman, he never compromised his strict Vaiṣṇava principles. Most of his fellow Bengalis had taken up fish-eating, but Abhay was always careful to avoid non-Vaiṣṇava foods, even at hotels. Once at a vegetarian hotel, the Empire Hindu Hotel in Bombay, he was served onions, and sometimes hotel people tried to serve him mushrooms, garlic, and even eggs, but all of these he carefully avoided. Keeping a small semblance of his home routine, he would take his bath early in the morning with cold water. He followed this routine year-round, and when, in Saharanpur, he did so during the bitter cold weather, the hotelkeeper was greatly surprised.

Abhay conversed with many people in his travels. A doctor in Dacca told him that on his way to the office he had passed a farmer talking to a friend and could tell by the sound of the farmer's cough that the farmer would die within a few hours. Another doctor told Abhay that he had just come from seeing a pneumonia patient who was defying nature and medical science by continuing to live. He met a Muhammadan doctor in Gayā who lamented that he had just lost a patient, although he had given the man the very best medicine. Such accounts from men of the medical profession confirmed Abhay's conviction that without God's sanction no one could be saved. Not that he ever thought of his medical sales as philanthropic work; Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had already convinced him that the only way to save a person was by giving him Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Abhay's medical products were strictly for business.

On one business trip—it was in 1925—he traveled through Agra, only forty miles south of Vṛndāvana. Taking the opportunity, he made his first visit to holy Vṛndāvana, fulfilling his childhood aspiration. He loved the sight of Vṛndāvana, but he could spend only a day or two; even a single day away from his sales work could be critical. As a reverent pilgrim, Abhay visited a few temples, especially the principal temples established by the followers of Lord Caitanya. But he had to move on.

There were also risks in traveling. Once he was sitting in a train compartment in Mathurā station when a monkey suddenly entered and took away his belongings. Early one morning before dawn, while he was on his way to Kanpur in a two-wheeled horse carriage, the horse was going at a fast trot when suddenly it hit a large heap of rubbish in the middle of the road. The carriage turned upside down, horse, driver, and carriage all landed in a heap, and Abhay was thrown into the air. But he landed unharmed, feeling as though he had just changed to another seat. Because Abhay sat but said nothing, the driver thought he had been knocked unconscious and became anxious. The passenger was all right, however, and the driver considered it a miracle, since the cart had so violently ejected him. Abhay took it that he had been saved by Kṛṣṇa, and he remembered similar incidents, starting with his childhood when his clothing had caught on fire. Kṛṣṇa had always protected him.

For five years Abhay traveled widely out of Allahabad, and when he was home he put in long hours at the dispensary. But he also spent time with his wife and played with his children.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When my son was about two years old, he was very naughty, always doing some mischief. My friends used to visit me and call my son, Pacha. "Pacha, if you sit down for one minute, silently, I will give you a gift." But the boy failed. He could not sit down, even for a minute. There was a table fan, and Pacha was wanting to touch it. I said, "No, no, don't touch." But again he tried to touch it, so my friend said, "Just lower the speed and let him touch it." So I unplugged the fan, and then he touched it. It did not harm him, but it hit his finger with a loud noise, "Tunng!" And then he would not touch again. I would ask him, "Touch again?" but he would not.

As soon as his daughter, Sulakshmana, could speak, he began teaching her the Bengali translation of the prayer Gurv-aṣṭakam, which begins, "The spiritual master is receiving benedictions from the ocean of mercy. Just as a cloud pours water on a forest fire to extinguish it, the spiritual master extinguishes the blazing fire of material life, of repeated birth and death."

Except for his obligatory travels, Abhay stayed at home and satisfied his family. He tended diligently to his business, and it prospered.

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It was Kumbha-melā, January 1928. Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja of the Gaudiya Math had come to Allahabad with a few men. One day he walked unannounced into the Prayag Pharmacy, and all of a sudden Abhay was seeing them again, after so many years. "Oh, these are the people I saw before!" he thought. "Gaudiya Math. Yes, come in."

Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Swami was the same sannyāsī who had visited Narendranath Mullik in Calcutta, a visit that had led to Abhay's going to visit Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Folding his palms in a humble gesture, standing before Abhay in simple saffron khādī robes, his shaven head, with a tuft of śikhā in the back, his forehead marked with Vaiṣṇava tilaka, Tīrtha Mahārāja said to Abhay, "We are new here. We are going to establish a temple in Allahabad. We have heard your name, so we have come to you. Please help us."

Abhay was joyful: "Yes, I will help you." He contributed what money he could and then introduced Tīrtha Mahārāja to Dr. Ghosh, who also contributed.

Abhay invited the Gaudiya Math devotees to come to his home and hold a bhajana and lecture; his wife would cook prasādam. They accepted, but when they arrived there was a misunderstanding. Gour Mohan, who was invalid, was staying in his room upstairs. "Please come down," Abhay called. "There's a meeting of the Gaudiya Math." Gour Mohan came downstairs, but when he saw the sādhus he mistook them for impersonalists from a nondevotional mission. He had not heard correctly what Abhay had said. Gour Mohan took his seat, but he observed the saffron-clothed men sullenly and even made a critical remark. Abhay, who was enlivened at the opportunity to associate with the Vaiṣṇavas and hear from them kṛṣṇa-kathā, could not understand his father's behavior. Then, as soon as Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Swami began his lecture, Gour Mohan understood. "Oh,

they are Vaiṣṇavas!" he cried. Old and invalid as he was, he immediately fell down at their feet: "I misunderstood you, sir. I thought you were sannyāsīs from another mission. I am glad to meet you."

After Kumbha-melā, Pradipa Tīrtha Swami left, but five or six brahmacārī disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī stayed on in Allahabad, maintaining a small maṭha headquarters. They worshiped the Deity, held an evening program of kīrtana and lecture, and preached actively to the local people. The devotee in charge, Atulānanda Brahmacārī, would visit the homes of Allahabad citizens, trying to solicit subscriber members for the maṭha; for half a rupee per month, a person would receive a subscription to the Gaudiya Math magazine.

In the course of his door-to-door soliciting, Atulānanda knocked on the door of Abhay Charan De. Abhay received him very hospitably and offered him some rice and fruit. Abhay was very receptive to the philosophy and relished discussions with Atulānanda, who made it a point to visit Mr. De repeatedly and speak with him about Lord Caitanya and the Bhagavad-gītā. Abhay also inquired into the recent activities of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. By now, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had established the Gaudiya Printing Works in Calcutta and had begun to publish the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, in several volumes with his own annotations. He had also published an edited version of Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata from his center in Dacca. He had opened centers in Bhubaneswar, Madras, and Purī.

Abhay's interest was insatiable. Atulānanda told him how in 1925 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had led a big procession, circumambulating the holy land of Navadvīpa, with Deities riding on the backs of gorgeously decorated elephants, and with devotees from all parts of India attending. Envious professional priests who opposed Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's acceptance of disciples from all castes had employed a gang to help them hurl bricks and rocks on the procession. But Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had continued, undaunted. In 1926 he had toured throughout India, preaching the message of Lord Caitanya. He had also installed Deities in the large temple of Śrī Caitanya Math in Māyāpur. And a year ago he had begun publishing his magazine Sajjana-toṣaṇī in three languages, including an English edition called The Harmonist.

After several visits and hours of discussion on the activities and philosophy of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, Atulānanda brought Mr. De to the Allahabad āśrama. Shortly thereafter, the maṭha relocated to a rented house on South Mallaca Street near Ram Bagh, just a short walk from Abhay's house. Now it was possible for Abhay to visit every evening. After work, he would attend the maṭha, where he would play the mṛdaṅga, surprising the brahmacārīs with his already developed mṛdaṅga-playing skills. He sang bhajanas with them and sometimes took the lead part in the congregational singing. He would also bring important persons from Allahabad to visit the maṭha. For the brahmacārīs, Abhay seemed to give new life to their āśrama, and for Abhay new life had come to him in his reunion with the disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

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In 1930 Gour Mohan's health took a turn for the worse, and his family members gathered around him, thinking that his end had come. Abhay had been in Bombay on business, and it was late when he reached Allahabad and knocked on the door. Gour Mohan told his daughter Rajesvari, "Open

the door. Abhay has come." She replied, "No, he is in Bombay." Gour Mohan repeated, "I tell you that he has come. You open the door!" It was about midnight. She went downstairs, opened the door, and found that her brother had indeed come. Abhay went to his father: "How are you?"

"I am all right," Gour Mohan replied. "You just take rest for the night."

The next morning Abhay called the doctor. "How your father is living we don't know," the doctor told him. "He has practically no pulse. He has been living without food for several months."

Abhay asked his father, "What is your wish? Tell me."

"Why are you asking?" his father replied. "Has the doctor told you anything?"

Abhay said, "No, I am asking because I am staying in Bombay and you are here. So if you have any wish, any intention, let me know. I am here. I am here for you." Gour Mohan told him to give their cow to the Allahabad Gaudiya Math. So Abhay took the cow, along with her calf, and donated them to the maṭha.

Then again he asked his father, "Have you got any other wish?"

And again his father asked, "Has the doctor told you anything?"

"No, no! I am simply asking because for my business I have to go."

Then Gour Mohan said, "Invite all the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas of Allahabad, and other Vaiṣṇavas also. Let them chant hari-nāma in the evening, and you supply them with good food. That is my wish." Abhay arranged it, and in the evening the hari-nāma started. At eleven o'clock all of them took prasādam and left. That night, Gour Mohan passed away.

Abhay felt the loss of his father painfully. His father had given him everything he had ever wanted, had been careful to raise him as a pure Vaiṣṇava, and had always worshiped Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Although Abhay was a competent young man, he felt lost without his dearest protector and friend. More than anyone else, Gour Mohan was the one who had always guided Abhay and treated him as the most special person. Without his father, Abhay now felt hopeless. He suddenly felt the same dependency he had felt as a small boy—but now without his father. The one who had always treated him as a pet son deserving all loving attention, the one who had given him whatever he had wanted and who had literally prayed to every holy man he met that his son become a great devotee of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī—that best well-wisher was now gone.

On the day of śrāddha, thirteen days after Gour Mohan passed away, Abhay and his brother posed for a formal photograph. In accordance with the religious custom, the two sons had shaved their heads. The photograph shows Abhay and his brother sitting on either side of a formal portrait of their father. The portrait is on an elevated stand and is surrounded with dark cloth. The picture is nicely framed. Gour Mohan looks old but still thoughtful and intent—not so old as in the former portrait where he had looked emaciated, with eyes almost dimmed.

Abhay, with his head shaved, looks like a renounced monk, and his body is covered with the robes of a monk, simple drapes in broad folds covering the upper and lower parts of his body. He looks quite different than he had in the picture that was taken in the same place, with the same rough carpet on the floor, years before. In that picture, with his wife and children gathered around him, he was very much the young householder, surrounded by his responsibilities of family and looking like he knew how to conduct himself well and move energetically in the world. But in this photo, although his children are present, they are seated unattended on the floor. Abhay's left hand is on his knee, poised and yet at rest, whereas in the former picture, his left hand had been holding his restless son. Abhay's wife is not present.

In this picture, Abhay looks striking. One cannot tell that he usually has a head of hair and a mustache, which he has only recently shorn for the mournful observance of his father's passing away. Instead, this seems to be his natural appearance. There is a mysterious, spiritual air about him, as one might expect in a meditating saint. His look is neither agitated nor cheerful nor sorrowful. It is peaceful and knowing, as if he has suddenly become a sādhu on the day his father has passed away. He looks like the sādhu his father envisioned he would become. He looks as if he is and always was a sādhu and has suddenly been revealed as such on this day. Even by the most casual inspection of the photo, it appears that by shaving his head and dressing in robes, with no shirt or shoes, Abhay has become a sādhu.

SPL 4: "How Shall I Serve you?"

CHAPTER FOUR

"How Shall I Serve you?"

I have every hope that you can turn yourself into a very good English preacher if you serve the mission to inculcate the novel impression of Lord Chaitanya's teachings to the people in general as well as philosophers and religionists.

—Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī

in a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda,

December 1936

In October of 1932, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī led a group of hundreds of disciples and pilgrims on a month-long parikrama, or circumambulation, of the sacred places of Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana residents and visitors perform parikrama by following the old, dry bed of the Yamunā River and circumambulating the Vṛndāvana area, stopping at the places where Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes when He roamed in Vṛndāvana five thousand years ago. Abhay had wanted to attend Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's parikrama but couldn't because of his work. Nevertheless, on the twentieth day of the pilgrimage he traveled from Allahabad, intent on seeing Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī again and hoping to join the parikrama party at Kosi, just outside Vṛndāvana, at least for a day.

The parikrama Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had organized was one of the biggest ever seen in Vṛndāvana. By engaging so many people, he was using the parikrama as a method of mass preaching. Even as early as 1918, when he had first begun his missionary work, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's specific contribution had been his emphasis on preaching. Prior to his advent, the Vaiṣṇavas had generally avoided populated places, and they had performed their worship in holy, secluded places like Vṛndāvana. Even when they had traveled to preach, they would maintain the simple mode of the impoverished mendicant. The Gosvāmī followers during Lord Caitanya's time had lived in Vṛndāvana underneath trees; one night under one tree, the next night under another.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, whose aim was on preaching worldwide, knew that the renunciation of the Gosvāmīs was not possible for Westerners; therefore he wanted to introduce the idea that devotees could even live in a big palatial temple. He had accepted a large donation from a wealthy Vaiṣṇava merchant and in 1930 had constructed a large marble temple in the Baghbazar section of Calcutta. In the same year, he had moved, along with many followers, from his small rented quarters at Ultadanga to the impressive new headquarters.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was demonstrating that although a devotee should not spend a cent for his own sense gratification, he could spend millions of rupees for the service of Kṛṣṇa. While previously Vaiṣṇavas would not have had anything to do with the mechanized contrivances introduced by the British, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, on the authority of scripture, was demonstrating a higher understanding. It was Rūpa Gosvāmī, the great disciple of Lord Caitanya, who had written, "One is perfectly detached from all materialistic worldly entanglement not when one gives up everything but when one employs everything for the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. This is understood to be perfect renunciation in yoga." If everything is God's energy, then why should anything be given up? If God is good, then His energy is also good; material things should not be used for one's own sense enjoyment, but they could be and should be used for the service of Kṛṣṇa. So Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta wanted to use the most modern printing presses. He wanted to invite worldly people to hear kṛṣṇa-kathā in gorgeously built temples. And, for their preaching, devotees should not hesitate to ride in the best conveyances, wear sewn cloth, or live amidst material opulence.

It was in this spirit that he had constructed the building at Baghbazar and there displayed a theistic exhibition, a series of dioramas assembled from finely finished, painted, and dressed clay dolls. Such dolls are a traditional art form in Bengal, but the staging of nearly one hundred elaborate displays depicting the Vaiṣṇava philosophy and the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa had never before been seen. The theistic exhibition created a sensation, and thousands attended it daily.

In that same year, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had taken about forty disciples on a parikrama all over India, a tour featuring many public lectures and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's meetings with important men. By 1932 he had three presses in different parts of India printing six journals in various Indian dialects.

In Calcutta a politician had asked Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī how he could possibly print his Nadiyā Prakāśa as a daily newspaper. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had replied that it was not so amazing if one considered that in Calcutta alone there were almost half a dozen ordinary daily newspapers, although Calcutta was but one city amongst all the cities of India, India was but one

nation amongst many nations on the earth, the earth was but an insignificant planet amidst all the other planets in the universe, this universe was one amongst universes so numerous that each was like a single mustard seed in a big bag of mustard seeds, and the entire material creation was only one small fraction of the creation of God. Nadiyā Prakāśa was not printing the news of Calcutta or the earth but news from the unlimited spiritual sky, which is much greater than all the material worlds combined. So if the daily Calcutta newspapers could report limited earthly tidings, then small wonder that Nadiyā Prakāśa could appear daily. In fact, a newspaper about the spiritual world could be printed every moment, were there not a shortage of interested readers.

One of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's publications was in English, *The Harmonist*, and it advertised the Vṛndāvana parikrama of 1932.

CIRCUMAMBULATION OF SHRI BRAJA MANDAL

His Divine Grace Paramahansa Shri Shrimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Goswami Maharaj, the spiritual head of the Madhva-Gaudiya Vaishnava community, following Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, has been pleased to invite the co-operation of all persons of every nationality, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, age, or sex, in the devotional function of circumambulation of the holy sphere of Braja in the footsteps of the Supreme Lord Shri Krishna Chaitanya, Who exhibited the leela of performing the circumambulation of Shri Braja Mandal during the winter of 1514 A.D.

When Abhay had heard from the members of the Allahabad Gaudiya Math about the parikrama, he had been fully occupied with his local Prayag Pharmacy business and traveling to secure new accounts. But he had calculated how he could join at least for a day or two, and he had fixed his mind on again obtaining the darśana of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I was not initiated at the time of the parikrama, but I had very good admiration for these Gaudiya Math people. They were very kind to me, so I thought, "What are these people doing in this parikrama? Let me go." So I met them at Kosi.

The parikrama party traveled with efficient organization. An advance group, bringing all the bedding and tents, would go ahead to the next day's location, where they would make camp and set up the kitchen. Meanwhile, the main party, bearing the Deity of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and accompanied by kīrtana singers, would visit the places of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and in the evening arrive in camp.

The camp was divided into sections and arranged in a semicircle, and pilgrims were assigned to a particular section for the night. In the center were the quarters of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and the Deity of Lord Caitanya, and close by, the tents of the sannyāsīs. There were separate camps for ladies and men—married couples did not stay together. There was also a volunteer corps of guards who stayed up all night, patrolling the area. At night the camp, with its hundreds of tents with gaslights and campfires, resembled a small town, and local people would come to see, astonished at the arrangements. In the evening, everyone would gather to hear a discourse by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

The pilgrims would rise early each morning and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa together. Then, carrying the Deity of Lord Caitanya, they would set out in procession—kīrtana groups, the police band, the lead horse, the flag bearers, and all the pilgrims. They traveled to the holy places: the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the place where Lord Kṛṣṇa slew Kamsa, the Ādi-keśava temple, Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kuṇḍa, and many others.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's massive pilgrimage had been rolling on with great success when he met with serious opposition. The local temple proprietors in Vṛndāvana objected to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's awarding the sacred brahminical thread to devotees not born in the families of brāhmaṇas. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, throughout his lectures and writings, had repeatedly proven from the Vedic scriptures that one is a brāhmaṇa not by birth but by qualities. He often cited a verse from Sanātana Gosvāmī's Hari-bhakti-vilāsa stating that just as base metal when mixed with mercury can become gold, so an ordinary man can become a brāhmaṇa if initiated by a bona fide spiritual master. He also often cited a verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in which the great sage Nārada tells King Yudhiṣṭhira that if one is born in the family of a śūdra but acts as a brāhmaṇa he has to be accepted as a brāhmaṇa, and if one is born in the family of a brāhmaṇa but acts as a śūdra he is to be considered a śūdra. Because the prime method of spiritual advancement in the Age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of God, any person who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa should be recognized as a saintly person.

When the local paṇḍitas approached Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī for discussion, they questioned his leniency in giving initiation and his awarding the brahminical thread and sannyāsa dress to persons of lower castes. Because of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's scholarly, forceful presentation, the paṇḍitas seemed satisfied by the discussion, but when the parikrama party arrived at Vṛndāvana's seven main temples, which had been erected by the immediate followers of Lord Caitanya, the party found the doors closed. Vṛndāvana shopkeepers closed their businesses, and some people even threw stones at the passing pilgrims. But the parikrama party, led by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, continued in good spirits, despite the animosity, and on October 28 the party arrived at Kosi, the site of the treasury of Kṛṣṇa's father, King Nanda.

Abhay arrived in Mathurā by train from Allahabad and approached Kosi by ricksha. The countryside was full of charm for Abhay; instead of factories and large buildings there were mostly forests, and aside from the main paved road on which he traveled, there were only dirt roads and soft sandy lanes. As a Vaiṣṇava, Abhay felt sensations an ordinary man wouldn't. Now and then he sighted a peacock in the field, its exotic plumage proclaiming the glories of Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa. Even a nondevotee, however, could appreciate the many varieties of birds, their interesting cries and songs filling the air. Occasionally a tree would be filled with madly chirping sparrows making their urgent twilight clamor before resting for the night. Even one unaware of the special significance of Vṛndāvana could feel a relief of mind in this simple countryside where people built fires from cow manure fuel and cooked their evening meals in the open, their fires adding rich, natural smells to the indefinable mixture which was the odor of the earth. There were many gnarled old trees and colorful stretches of flowers—bushes of bright violet camelia, trees abloom with delicate white pārijāta blossoms, and big yellow kadamba flowers, rarely seen outside Vṛndāvana.

On the road there was lively horse-drawn ṭāṅgā traffic. The month of Kārttika, October-November, was one of the several times of the year that drew many pilgrims to Vṛndāvana. The one-horse

ṭāṅgās carried large families, some coming from hundreds of miles away. Larger bands of pilgrims, grouped by village, walked together, the women dressed in bright-colored sārīs, brown-skinned men and women sometimes singing bhajanas, carrying but a few simple possessions as they headed for the town of thousands of temples, Vṛndāvana. And there were businessmen like Abhay, dressed more formally, coming from a city, maybe to spend the weekend. Most of them had at least some semblance of a religious motive—to see Kṛṣṇa in the temple, to bathe in the holy Yamunā River, to visit the sites where Lord Kṛṣṇa had performed His pastimes such as the lifting of Govardhana Hill, the killing of the Keśī demon, or the dancing in the evening with the gopīs.

Abhay was sensitive to the atmosphere of Vṛndāvana, and he noted the activity along the road. But more than that, he cherished with anticipation the fulfillment of his journey—his meeting again, after a long separation, the saintly person he had always thought of within himself, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who had spoken to him in Calcutta and had convinced him of Lord Caitanya's mission to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Abhay would soon see him again, and this purpose filled his mind.

Upon reaching the lantern-illuminated camp of the Gaudiya Math and inquiring at the registration post, he was allowed to join the parikrama village. He was assigned to a tent of gr̥hastha men and was offered prasādam. The people were friendly and in good spirits, and Abhay talked of his activities with the maṭha members in Calcutta and Allahabad. Then there was a gathering—a sannyāsī was making an announcement. This evening, he said, there would be a scheduled visit to a nearby temple to see the Deity of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. Some of the pilgrims cheered, “Haribol! Hare Kṛṣṇa!” The sannyāsī also announced that His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would speak that evening for the last time and would be leaving the parikrama party the next day. So there was a choice of going on the parikrama or staying for the lecture.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So I met them in Kosi, and Keśava Mahārāja was informing that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta is going to Mathurā tomorrow morning and he will speak hari-kathā this evening. Anyone who wants to may remain. Or otherwise they may go to see Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. So at that time I think only ten or twelve men remained—Śrīdhara Mahārāja was one of them. And I thought it wise, “What can I see at this Śeṣaśāyī? Let me hear what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī will speak. Let me hear.”

When Abhay arrived, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was already speaking. He sat with his back erect, a shawl around his shoulders, not speaking like a professional lecturer giving a scheduled performance, but addressing a small gathering in his room. At last Abhay was in his presence again. Abhay marveled to see and hear him, this unique soul possessed of kṛṣṇa-kathā, speaking uninterruptedly about Kṛṣṇa in his deep, low voice, in ecstasy and deep knowledge. Abhay sat and heard with rapt attention.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been speaking regularly about sambandha, abhidheya, and prayojana. Sambandha is the stage of devotional service in which awareness of God is awakened, abhidheya is rendering loving service to the Lord, and prayojana is the ultimate goal, pure love of God. He stressed that his explanations were in exact recapitulation of what had originally been spoken by Kṛṣṇa and passed down through disciplic succession. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's particular utterance, mostly Bengali but sometimes English, with frequent quoting of Sanskrit from

the śāstras, was deep with erudition. "It is Kṛṣṇa," said Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, "who is the only Superlord over the entire universe and, beyond it, of Vaikuṇṭha, the transcendental region. As such, no one can raise any obstacle against His enjoyment."

An hour went by, two hours... The already small gathering in Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's room gradually thinned. A few sannyāsīs left, excusing themselves to tend to duties connected with the parikrama camp. Only a few intimate leaders remained. Abhay was the only outsider. Of course, he was a devotee, not an outsider, but in the sense that he was not a sannyāsī, was not handling any duties, was not even initiated, and was not traveling with the parikrama but had joined only for a day—in that sense he was an outsider. The philosophy Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was speaking, however, was democratically open to whoever would give an ardent hearing. And that Abhay was doing.

He was listening with wonder. Sometimes he would not even understand something, but he would go on listening intently, submissively, his intelligence drinking in the words. He felt Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī revealing to him the direct vision of the spiritual world, just as a person reveals something by opening a door or pushing aside a curtain. He was revealing the reality, and this reality was loving service to the lotus feet of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the supremely worshipable Personality of Godhead. How masterfully he spoke! And with utter conviction and boldness!

It was with such awe that Abhay listened with fastened attention. Of course, all Vaiṣṇavas accepted Kṛṣṇa as their worshipable Lord, but how conclusively and with what sound logic was the faith of the Vaiṣṇavas established by this great teacher! After several hours, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī stopped speaking. Abhay felt prepared to go on listening without cessation, and yet he had no puzzling doubts or queries to place forward. He wanted only to hear more. As Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta made his exit, Abhay bowed, offering his obeisances, and then left the intimate circle of sannyāsīs in their row of tents and went to the outer circle of tents, his mind surcharged with the words of his spiritual master.

Now their relationship seemed more tangible. He still treasured his original impression of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the saintly person who had spoken to him on the rooftop in Calcutta; but tonight that single impression that had sustained him for years in Allahabad had been enriched and filled with new life. His spiritual master and the impression of his words were as much a reality as the stars in the sky and the moon over Vṛndāvana. That impression of hearing from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was filling him with its reality, and all other reality was forming itself around the absolute reality of Śrīla Gurudeva, just as all the planets circle around the sun.

The next morning, Abhay was up with the others more than an hour before dawn, bathed, and chanting mantras in congregation. Later in the morning the tall, stately figure of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, dressed in plain saffron, got into the back seat of a car and rode away from the camp. Thoughtful and grave, he looked back and waved, accepting the loving farewell gestures of his followers. Abhay stood amongst them.

A little more than a month later, Abhay was again anticipating an imminent meeting with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, this time at Allahabad. Abhay had only recently returned from Vṛndāvana to his work at Prayag Pharmacy when the devotees at the Allahabad Gaudiya Math informed him of the good news. They had secured land and funds for constructing a building, the Śrī Rūpa Gaudiya Math, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would be coming on November 21 to preside over the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone. Sir William Malcolm Haily, governor of the United Provinces, would be the respected guest and, in a grand ceremony, would lay the foundation stone in the presence of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. When Abhay learned that there would also be an initiation ceremony, he asked if he could be initiated. Atulānanda, the maṭha's president, assured Abhay that he would introduce him to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

At home, Abhay discussed his initiation plans with his wife. She had no objection, but she did not want to take initiation herself. They were already worshiping the Deity at home and offering their food to the Deity. They believed in God and were living peacefully.

But for Abhay that was not enough. Although he would not force his wife, he knew that he must be initiated by a pure devotee. Avoiding sinful life, living piously—these things were necessary and good, but in themselves they did not constitute spiritual life and could not satisfy the yearning of the soul. Life's ultimate goal and the absolute necessity of the self was love of Kṛṣṇa. That love of Kṛṣṇa his father had already inculcated within him, and now he had to take the next step. His father would have been pleased to see him do it.

What he had learned from his father was now being solidified by someone capable of guiding all the fallen souls of the world to transcendental love of God. Abhay knew he should go forward and take complete shelter in the instructions of his spiritual master. And the scriptures enjoined, "He who is desirous of knowing the Absolute Truth must take shelter of a spiritual master who is in disciplic succession and who is fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Even Lord Caitanya, who was Kṛṣṇa Himself, had accepted a spiritual master, and only after initiation did He manifest the full symptoms of ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa while chanting the holy name.

As for the ritual initiation he had received at age twelve from a family priest, Abhay had never taken it very seriously. It had been a religious formality. But a guru was not a mere officiating ritualistic priest; so Abhay had rejected the idea that he already had a guru. He had never received instructions from him in bhakti, and his family guru had not linked him, through disciplic succession, with Kṛṣṇa. But by taking initiation from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī he would be linked with Kṛṣṇa. Bhaktisiddhānta, son of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and disciple of Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, was the guru in the twelfth disciplic generation from Lord Caitanya. He was the foremost Vedic scholar of the age, the expert Vaiṣṇava who could guide one back to Godhead. He was empowered by his predecessors to work for the highest welfare by giving everyone Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the remedy for all sufferings. Abhay felt that he had already accepted Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta as his spiritual master and that from their very first meeting he had already received his orders. Now if Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would accept him as his disciple, the relationship would be confirmed.

He was coming so soon after Abhay had seen and heard him in Vṛndāvana! That was how Kṛṣṇa acted, through His representative. It was as if his spiritual master, in coming to where Abhay had his family and business, was coming to draw him further into spiritual life. Without Abhay's having

attempted to bring it about, his relationship with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was deepening. Now Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was coming to him, as if by a higher arrangement.

On the day of the ceremony, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī met with his disciples at the Allahabad Gaudiya Math on South Mallaca Street. While he was speaking hari-kathā and taking questions, Atulānanda Brahmācārī took the opportunity to present several devotees, Abhay amongst them, as candidates for initiation. The Allahabad devotees were proud of Mr. De, who regularly attended the maṭha in the evening, and led bhajanas, listened to the teachings and spoke them himself, and often brought respectable guests. He had contributed money and had induced his business colleagues also to do so. With folded palms, Abhay looked up humbly at his spiritual master. He and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta were now face to face, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta recognized him and was visibly pleased to see him. He already knew him. "Yes," he said, exchanging looks with Abhay, "he likes to hear. He does not go away. I have marked him. I will accept him as my disciple."

As the moment and the words became impressed into his being, Abhay was in ecstasy. Atulānanda was pleasantly surprised that his Gurudeva was already in approval of Mr. De. Other disciples in the room were also pleased to witness Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's immediate acceptance of Mr. De as a good listener. Some of them wondered when or where Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had arrived at such an estimation of the young pharmacist.

At the initiation, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was seated on a vyāsāsana, and the room was filled with guests and members of the Gaudiya Math. Those to be initiated sat around a small mound of earth, where one of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's sannyāsīs prepared a fire and offered grains and fruits into the flames, while everyone chanted mantras for purification. Abhay's sister and brother were present, but not his wife.

Abhay basked in the presence of his Gurudeva. "Yes, he likes to hear"—the words of his spiritual master and his glance of recognition had remained with Abhay. Abhay would continue pleasing his spiritual master by hearing well. "Then," he thought, "I will be able to speak well." The Vedic literature described nine processes of devotional service, the first of which was śravaṇam, hearing about Kṛṣṇa; then came kīrtanam, chanting about and glorifying Him. By sitting patiently and hearing at Kosi, he had pleased Kṛṣṇa's representative, and when Kṛṣṇa's representative was pleased, Kṛṣṇa was pleased. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had not praised him for donating money to the maṭha and hadn't advised him to forsake his family and business and travel with him, nor had he asked Abhay to perform great austerities, like the yogīs who mortify their bodies with fasts and difficult vows. But "He likes to hear," he had said. "I have marked him." Abhay thought about it and, again, listened carefully as his spiritual master conducted the initiation.

Finally, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta called for Abhay to come forward and receive the hari-nāma initiation by accepting his beads. After offering prostrated obeisances, Abhay extended his right hand and accepted the strand of japa beads from the hand of his spiritual master. At the same time, he also received the sacred brahminical thread, signifying second initiation. Usually, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta gave the first initiation, harināma, and only after some time, when he was satisfied with the progress of the disciple, would he give the second initiation. But he offered Abhay both initiations at the same time. Now Abhay was a full-fledged disciple, a brāhmaṇa, who could perform sacrifices, such as this fire yajña for initiation; he could worship the Deity in the temple and would be

expected to discourse widely. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta added aravinda, "lotus," to his name; now he was Abhay Charanaravinda.

After Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī left Allahabad for Calcutta, Abhay keenly felt the responsibility of working on behalf of his spiritual master. At the initiation Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had instructed Abhay to study Rūpa Gosvāmī's Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, which outlined the loving exchanges between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees and explained how a devotee can advance in spiritual life. Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu was a "lawbook" for devotional service, and Abhay would study it carefully. He was glad to increase his visits to the Allahabad center and to bring new people. Even at his first meeting with his spiritual master he had received the instruction to preach the mission of Lord Caitanya, and now he began steadily and carefully considering how to do so. Preaching was a responsibility at least as binding as that of home and business. Even in his home he wanted to engage as far as possible in preaching. He discussed with his wife about his plans for inviting people into their home, offering them prasādam, and holding discussions about Kṛṣṇa. She didn't share his enthusiasm.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: My wife was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, but she had some other idea. Her idea was just to worship the Deity at home and live peacefully. My idea was preaching.

* * *

It was not possible for Abhay to travel with his spiritual master or even to see him often. His pharmaceutical business kept him busy, and he traveled frequently. Whenever possible, however, he tried to time a business trip to Calcutta when his spiritual master was also there. Thus over the next four years he managed to see his spiritual master perhaps a dozen times.

Whenever Abhay visited Calcutta, the assistant librarian at the Gaudiya Math, Nityānanda Brahmācārī, would meet him at Howrah train station with a two-horse carriage belonging to the maṭha. Nityānanda saw Abhay as an unusually humble and tolerant person. As they rode together to the maṭha, Abhay would inquire eagerly into the latest activities of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta: his traveling, his publishing, how many centers were currently open, how his disciples were doing. They wouldn't talk much about Abhay's business. Abhay would stay at the Gaudiya Math, usually for about five days. Sometimes he would visit one of his sisters who lived in Calcutta, but his main reason for coming was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta; and Abhay would take advantage of every opportunity to hear him.

Abhay didn't try to become a leader in the inner management of the Gaudiya Math. His spiritual master had initiated eighteen sannyāsīs, who carried out most of the preaching and leadership of the mission. Abhay was always the householder, occupied with his own business and family, never living within the maṭha except for brief visits. And yet he began to develop a close relationship with his spiritual master.

Sometimes Abhay would go to see him at the Caitanya Math, at the birthplace of Lord Caitanya in Māyāpur. One day at the Caitanya Math, Abhay was in the courtyard when a large poisonous snake crawled out in front of him. Abhay called out for his Godbrothers, but when they came everyone simply stood looking, uncertain what to do. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta came out on the veranda of the

second floor, glanced down, saw the snake, and immediately ordered, "Kill it." A boy then took a large stick and killed the snake.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So I thought, "How is it that Guru Mahārāja ordered the snake to be killed?" I was a little surprised, but later on I saw this verse, and then I was very glad: *modeta sādhuḥ api vṛścika-sarpa-hatyā*, "Even saintly persons take pleasure in the killing of a scorpion or a snake." It had remained a doubt, how Guru Mahārāja ordered the snake to be killed, but when I read this verse I was very much pleased that this creature or creatures like the snake should not be shown any mercy.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was reputed to be so austere and so strong in argument against other philosophies that even his own disciples were cautious in approaching him if he were sitting alone or if they had no specific business with him. Yet even though Abhay's contact with him was quite limited, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would always treat him kindly.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Whenever I met my Guru Mahārāja, he would always treat me very affectionately. Sometimes my Godbrothers would criticize because I would talk a little freely with him, and they would quote this English saying, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." But I would think, "Fool? Well, maybe, but that is the way I am." My Guru Mahārāja was always very, very affectionate to me. When I offered obeisances, he used to return, "Dāso 'smi": "I am your servant."

Sometimes as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta paced back and forth chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra aloud while fingering his beads, Abhay would enter the room and also chant, walking alongside his spiritual master. Once when Abhay entered Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's room, his spiritual master was sitting on a couch, and Abhay took his seat beside him on an equal level. But then he noticed that all the other disciples in the room were sitting on a lower level, at their spiritual master's feet. Abhay kept his seat, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said nothing of it, but Abhay never again sat on an equal level with his spiritual master.

Once in a room with many disciples, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was speaking and Abhay listening when an old man beside Abhay motioned to him. As Abhay leaned over to hear what the man wanted, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta suddenly spoke out in annoyance at the two apparently inattentive students. "Bābū," he first addressed the old man beside Abhay, "do you think you have purchased me with your 150-rupees-per-month donation?" And then, turning to Abhay: "Why don't you come up here and speak instead of me?" Abhay was outwardly mortified, yet he treasured the rebuke.

It was in a private meeting that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta once told Abhay of the risks he took by preaching so boldly.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: My Guru Mahārāja's contribution is that he defeated the caste gosvāmīs. He defeated this brāhmaṇism. He did it the same way as Caitanya Mahāprabhu did. As Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya/yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā*, sei "guru" haya: "There is no consideration whether one is a sannyāsī, a brāhmaṇa, a śūdra, or a gṛhastha. No. Anyone who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa, he is all right, he is gosvāmī, and he is brāhmaṇa."

But no one else taught that since Lord Caitanya. This was my Guru Mahārāja's contribution. And for this reason, he had to face so many vehement protests from these brāhmaṇas of the caste gosvāmīs.

Once they conspired to kill him—my Guru Mahārāja told me personally. By his grace, when we used to meet alone he used to talk about so many things. He was so kind that he used to talk with me, and he personally told me that these people, “They wanted to kill me.”

They collected twenty-five thousand rupees and went to bribe the police officer in charge of the area, saying, “You take these twenty-five thousand rupees. We shall do something against Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and you don't take any steps.” He could understand that they wanted to kill him. So the police officer frankly came to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī: “Of course, we accept bribes, and we indulge in such things, but not for a sādhu, not for a saintly person. I cannot dare.” So, the police officer refused and said to my Guru Mahārāja, “You take care. This is the position.” This was because he so vehemently protested.

And he liked boldness in his disciples. Abhay heard of an occasion when one of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's disciples had been very outspoken at a public meeting and had denounced a highly regarded Māyāvādī monk as “a foolish priest.” The remark had caused a disruption at the meeting, and some of the disciples reported the incident to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, thinking he would be displeased that his disciple had caused a disturbance. But Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was pleased and remarked, “He has done well.” His displeasure occurred, rather, when he heard of someone's compromise.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When my Guru Mahārāja was present, even big, big scholars were afraid to talk with even his beginning students. My Guru Mahārāja was called “living encyclopedia.” He could talk with anyone on any subject, he was so learned. And no compromise. So-called saints, avatāras, yogīs—everyone who was false was an enemy to my Guru Mahārāja. He never compromised. Some Godbrothers complained that this preaching was a “chopping technique” and it would not be successful. But those who criticized him fell down.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was known as the *simha* (“lion”) guru. On occasion, when he saw someone he knew to be a proponent of impersonalism, he would call that person over and challenge: “Why are you cheating the people with Māyāvādī philosophy?” He would often tell his disciples not to compromise. “Why should you go flatter?” he would say. “You should speak the plain truth, without any flattery. Money will come anyway.”

Whenever Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta wrote or spoke the Vaiṣṇava philosophy, he was uncompromising; the conclusion was according to the śāstra, and the logic strong. But sometimes Abhay would hear his spiritual master express the eternal teachings in a unique way that Abhay knew he would never forget. “Don't try to see God,” Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would say, “but act in such a way that God sees you.”

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta condemned temple proprietors who made a business of showing the Deity for a living. To be a sweeper in the street was more honorable, he said. He coined a Bengali phrase,

śālagrām-dvārā bādām bhaṅga: "The priests are taking the śālagrāma Deity as a stone for cracking nuts." In other words, if a person shows the śālagrāma form of the Lord (or any form of the Deity) simply with a view to make money, then he is seeing the Deity not as the Lord but as a stone, a means for earning his livelihood.

Abhay had the opportunity to see his spiritual master deal with the nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose, who had been Abhay's schoolmate at Scottish Churches' College. Bose had come in a somewhat critical mood, concerned about Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's recruiting young men into religious life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Subhas Chandra Bose came to my Guru Mahārāja and said, "So many people you have captured. They are doing nothing for nationalism."

My Guru Mahārāja replied, "Well, for your national propaganda you require very strong men, but these people are very weak. You can see, they are very skinny. So don't put your glance upon them. Let them eat something and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." In this way he avoided him.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta used to say that when the day came when high court judges were devotees of Kṛṣṇa with Vaiṣṇava tilaka on their foreheads, then he would know that the mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness was becoming successful.

He said that Jesus Christ was a śaktyāveśa-avatāra, an empowered incarnation of God. "How can it be otherwise?" he said. "He sacrificed everything for God."

In his scholarly language he declared, "The materialistic demeanor cannot possibly stretch to the transcendental autocrat." But sometimes in speech he phrased it in a more down-to-earth way: "The mundane scholars who are trying to understand the Supreme Lord by their senses and mental speculation are like a person trying to taste the honey in a bottle by licking the outside of the bottle." Philosophy without religion, he said, is dry speculation; and religion without philosophy is sentiment and sometimes fanaticism.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said that the whole world was simply a society of cheaters and cheated. He gave the example that loose women often visit certain holy places in India with the idea of seducing the sādhus, thinking that to have a child by a sādhu is prestigious. And immoral men dress themselves as sādhus, hoping to be seduced by the cheating women. His conclusion: a person should aspire to leave the material world and go back to Godhead, because "this material world is not a fit place for a gentleman."

Abhay saw that when disciples asked his spiritual master about something in the future, he never replied, "Yes, it is going to happen," or "Yes, we are going to do it." Rather, he would say, "Yes, if Kṛṣṇa desires, it may be." Although in his younger years he had been an astrologer and able to predict the future, he had given it up.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was a lifetime brahmacārī and was very strict about avoiding association with women. Once Abhay was sitting with his spiritual master when another disciple was present, along with his young wife. The wife asked Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta if she might speak with him privately, but he replied, “No, whatever it is, you can ask here. I cannot see you in private.” Abhay was impressed by this, since Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was in his sixties and the girl could have been his granddaughter; regardless, he would not speak with any woman alone.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta liked to make his disciples into sannyāsīs. But one day one of his sannyāsa disciples was forcibly dragged away by his wife. In tears, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta lamented that he was unable to save that soul. Yet he did not speak disparagingly of Kṛṣṇa conscious family life: “I would have sex hundreds of times if I thought that I could raise Kṛṣṇa conscious children.”

He would send his brahmacārīs out to sell the Gaudiya Math magazine and books, and even if a brahmacārī were able to sell only one or two, it would please him very much, and he would exclaim, “You are so nice.” In considering whether essays were worthy for publication, he would count how many times the word Kṛṣṇa or Caitanya had been used; if these holy names had been quoted sufficiently, he would say, “That’s all right. This can be used.”

He would say in Bengali, “Prāṇ āche yār, se hetu pracār:” “A person must have life to be a preacher—a dead man cannot preach.” When some of his preachers who had gone to chant and speak reported that no one had attended their meeting, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta replied, “That doesn’t matter. The four walls will hear you. That is sufficient. Don’t be disappointed. Go on chanting.” And in commenting on the fact that some of his disciples had fallen away: “Some of the soldiers will die,” he said.

But he did not want his disciples to lead an easygoing life—he once criticized a disciple as being “ease-loving”—nor should they attempt to practice austerities in seclusion. He would sing a song of his own composition, Mana tumi kiser vaiṣṇava? “My dear mind, what kind of Vaiṣṇava are you? You are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in a solitary place, imitating the great saints Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Rūpa Gosvāmī, but your meditation is actually to think of women and money. Your mind is filled with such dirty things, so your bhajana is simply cheating.” He taught that if a devotee gave up his preaching in the city in favor of solitary meditation, that was a method of cheating by imitating the great saints in hopes of getting cheap adoration from others. Therefore, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta never liked to open a branch of the Gaudiya Math in a place that was not very much populated.

Abhay went on listening to his spiritual master at every opportunity, but rarely did Abhay put a philosophical inquiry before him. He preferred simply to listen.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I never asked my spiritual master a question, except one: “How shall I serve you?”

* * *

Abhay Charan De became prominent in the pharmaceutical business. He worked well for Bose’s Laboratory, and other companies wanted him as their agent. He had hopes of becoming rich.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: My Guru Mahārāja ordered me, "You do this." But I thought, "Let me first of all become a rich man. Then I shall do." In the beginning, I was thinking, "Now my Godbrothers have taken sannyāsa. They are begging from door to door. Why shall I beg? Let me earn money and start Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

The biggest pharmaceutical company in India, Bengal Chemical, made him an offer, but when they did not fulfill all his conditions he turned them down—though later he regretted it. Still, there were good signs. The astrologer had predicted he could become one of India's richest men, and Dr. Kartick Bose had told his father-in-law, "He's a very intelligent man!"

But there were also other signs. As many accounts as he had secured by his wide travels, there were also that many bills to collect. Many of the accounts began to fall behind in their payments, and the accumulated debt began to grow, until he owed Bose's Laboratory a total of ten thousand rupees. And Abhay had enemies. The manager who had taken over Abhay's old position as office manager with Bose's Laboratory in Calcutta tried to turn Dr. Bose against Abhay, insinuating that he was too independent—they had heard of his negotiating with Bengal Chemical, and the new manager attributed the accumulating debt to Abhay's lack of loyalty to the home office. Kartick Bose remained favorably inclined towards Abhay, but when the debt became a financial strain he went to Allahabad to investigate. At Prayag Pharmacy he spoke with Dr. Ghosh, who told him, "He is a very honest man. It is no fault of his. In good faith he gave all these chemists drugs and credit. But he can't realize the money."

"All right," Dr. Bose said, "but I can't go on giving him money." Abhay went over the accounts with Dr. Kartick Bose, and they both agreed that the best way to settle the matter was for Dr. Bose to take over the Prayag Pharmacy and all of Abhay's accounts. Thus Abhay was absolved of debt but unemployed.

Atulānanda Brahmācārī approached him: "Why don't you come to the maṭha? Now you are free." Abhay began to visit more frequently the nearby Rūpa Gosvāmī Math, where the Gaudiya Math men, in their renounced brahmācārī spirit, suggested that he depend completely on Kṛṣṇa, give up the world, move in with them, and become a full-time preacher. But for Abhay there was no question of abandoning business. If he did, what would happen to his wife and children? He and Radharani now had a third child, a son, so the financial responsibility was increasing. The brahmācārīs were well intentioned in asking him to renounce the world, and it was fine for them to do so, but Abhay couldn't take it very seriously.

Without work he was in a critical situation; but he remained confident and eager to take on new employment. There were other companies that would like to have him as their agent. And some of his old customers wanted him to service them, even if he weren't Bose's man. Abhay thought about starting his own pharmaceutical laboratory. Finally he decided he would start his own factory, but in a much bigger city than Allahabad. He settled on Bombay.

He decided that his family should remain in Allahabad and he and his brother would travel to Bombay, take an apartment, and survey the prospects for starting a factory there. Although Radharani was used to her husband's traveling, it had never been as extended as this promised to be. Abhay talked with her, explaining that his recent business loss had been the arrangement of

Kṛṣṇa. Now, again to provide for his family, he would have to start a large business, and that could best be done in a major city like Bombay. But family life in Allahabad would be temporarily disrupted. He set up a very small pharmaceutical manufacturing operation there in Allahabad, put his nephew Tulasi in charge, and left for Bombay with his brother.

In Bombay, Abhay rented an apartment on Grant Road and, applying the knowledge he had gained as manager of Bose's Laboratory, started his own pharmaceutical factory. Business was going well, when a large company, Smith Institute, wanted him as their sales agent. Abhay took the job, thinking that he could earn money as Smith's representative while at the same time developing his own business. He was confident of his ability to earn money in the pharmaceutical line.

While traveling around Bombay on business, Abhay met some members of the Gaudiya Math—Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja and Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, senior sannyāsī disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Abhay recognized them as respected Godbrothers, well versed in the scriptures and Vaiṣṇava philosophy. It seemed he was destined to find his Godbrothers wherever he went. Both he and the sannyāsīs regarded their apparently odd meeting in the city as auspicious. Like the members of the Gaudiya Math he had met in Allahabad, these preachers had no permanent center, but they were trying to start one. On behalf of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, they were going door to door soliciting supporters for a Bombay branch of the Gaudiya Math.

Abhay wanted to help. As a fellow Godbrother in the service of his spiritual master, he offered them his services. Although as sannyāsīs they were in a superior position, in their somewhat helpless condition they looked up to Abhay for help. They had been staying in a small place on Proctor Road and had found little opportunity to make important contacts. Now they formed a team, Abhay introducing the sannyāsīs to business acquaintances and the sannyāsīs taking donations for the new center. Abhay Charanaravinda was good at collecting funds, and he willingly gave his time. Again, his Godbrothers began pulling at him to participate fully in the Gaudiya Math preaching.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We made a party for collecting alms—Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and myself. I took them to some of my chemist and doctor friends, and in two days we collected five hundred rupees. Śrīdhara Mahārāja would speak, I would introduce, and Gosvāmī Mahārāja would canvass. So Gosvāmī Mahārāja very much appreciated, and he began to speak highly about me: “For a bābu, he is so expert. He has got so many friends, and he has collected so much. Why should he not be in charge of our maṭha? Why shouldn't he live with us? Why is he living separately?”

Abhay visited the maṭha quarters on Proctor Road, where he joined the devotees in kīrtana and heard them speak from the Bhāgavatam. At the sannyāsīs' request, Abhay took on the responsibility of finding a more suitable place for the Bombay center. Wherever he went in the city, he looked for likely locations. Just as he had responsibilities for his wife and family in Allahabad, by dint of his initiation he was responsibly bound to assist his Godbrothers. He had to take part in the preaching, not simply struggle so that he might exist in the world of business competition. But he didn't think he could ever live like the sannyāsīs—no possessions, no business, sleeping on the bare floor, taking only simple meals.

February 25, 1935

It was the sixty-second birthday of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. At Jagannātha Purī, where Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was residing, the devotees observed the day with ceremony. At the small Bombay center, the few disciples planned an evening observance and invited local people. For the occasion, Abhay wrote a poem.

Adore adore ye all

The happy day,

Blessed than heaven,

Sweeter than May,

When he appeared at Puri

The holy place,

My Lord and Master

His Divine Grace.

Oh! my Master

The evangelic angel,

Give us Thy light,

Light up Thy candle.

Struggle for existence

A human race.

The only hope

His Divine Grace.

Misled we are

All going astray.

Save us Lord

Our fervent pray.

Wonder Thy ways
To turn our face.
Adore Thy feet
Your Divine Grace.
Forgotten Krishna
We fallen souls,
Paying most heavy
The illusion's toll.
Darkness around
All untrace.
The only hope
His Divine Grace.
Message of service
Thou hast brought.
A healthful life
As Chaitanya wrought.
Unknown to all
It's full of brace.
That's your gift
Your Divine Grace.
Absolute is sentient
Thou hast proved,
Impersonal calamity

Thou hast moved.

This gives us a life

Anew and fresh.

Worship Thy feet

Your Divine Grace.

Had you not come

Who had told

The message of Krishna

Forceful and bold.

That's your right.

You have the mace.

Save me a fallen

Your Divine Grace.

The line of service

As drawn by you

Is pleasing and healthy

Like morning dew.

The oldest of all

But in new dress.

Miracle done

Your Divine Grace.

Abhay Charan das

Abhay also composed a speech, which he read before the assembled guests and members of the Gaudiya Math. Although his first language was Bengali, his English was clear and natural.

Gentlemen, the offerings of such a homage as has been arranged this evening to the Acharyadeva is not a sectarian concern, because when we speak of the fundamental principle of Gurudeva or Acharyadeva, we speak of something that is of universal application. There does not arise any question of discriminating my Guru from that of yours or anyone else's. There is only one Guru who appears in an infinity of forms to teach you, me and all others. The Guru or Acharyadeva, as we learn from the bona fide scriptures, delivers the message of the absolute world, I mean the transcendental abode of the Absolute Personality where everything nondifferentially serves the Absolute Truth.

Like the poem, the speech was personal, but even more than the poem it was authoritative, philosophical preaching. The Godbrothers were impressed to hear Abhay presenting the Vaiṣṇava philosophy so expertly. How was it possible? Of course, it should not have come as a surprise; he had heard the Vaiṣṇava philosophy from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, just like his Godbrothers. Why should he not be able to enunciate the teachings of his spiritual master, having heard from him and having read Gītā and Bhāgavatam and Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu? Was he not a devotee in the paramparā? But until now, no one knew he could preach in English so expertly.

Therefore, if the Absolute Truth is one, about which we think there is no difference of opinion, the Guru also cannot be two. The Acharyadeva to whom we have assembled tonight to offer our humble homage is not the Guru of a sectarian institution or one out of many differing exponents of the truth. On the contrary, he is the Jagatguru, or the Guru of all of us, the only difference is that some obey him wholeheartedly, while others do not obey him directly.

The guru of whom Abhay spoke, of course, was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the representative of the original compiler of the scriptures, Vyāsadeva. Abhay explained how Lord Kṛṣṇa had delivered transcendental knowledge to Brahmā, the creator of this particular universe. From Brahmā the knowledge had descended to Nārada, from Nārada to Vyāsa, from Vyāsa to Madhva... Because Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was presenting the Vedic knowledge as is, without any interpretation—in paramparā—he was the bona fide ācārya who could enlighten others with the revealed knowledge of the Vedas.

Abhay continued:

Gentlemen, our knowledge is so poor, our senses are so imperfect and our sources are so limited that it is not possible for us to have even the slightest knowledge of the absolute region without surrendering ourselves at the lotus-feet of Sree Vyāsadeva or His bona fide representative.

This transcendental knowledge, Abhay explained, had been known in India for thousands of years, and this knowledge—although presently obscured—was India's real gift to the world.

We must conclude that the darkness of the present Age is not due to lack of material advancement, but that we have lost the clue to our spiritual advancement which is the prime necessity of human life and the criterion of the highest type of civilisation. Throwing of bombs from aeroplanes is no

advancement of civilisation from the primitive, uncivilised way of dropping big stones on the heads of the enemies from the tops of the hills. Improvement of the art of killing our neighbours by inventing machine guns and by means of poisonous gases is certainly no advancement from primitive barbarism priding itself on its art of killing by bows and arrows, nor does the development of a sense of pampered selfishness prove anything more than intellectual animalism...

Thus, while others were yet in the womb of historical oblivion, the sages of India had developed a different kind of civilisation which enables us to know ourselves. They had discovered that we are not at all material entities, but that we are all spiritual, permanent and non-destructible servants of the Absolute.

The speech continued, describing the horrible consequences of a misspent human life, the sufferings of repeated birth and death. Again and again, Abhay stressed the need to surrender to the spiritual master. He criticized empirical, mundane philosophers, godless politicians, and blind sense gratifiers. He repeatedly pointed to the soul's natural and sublime position as the servant of God and as the servant of the pure devotee of God. Abhay, an initiated disciple of his spiritual master for a little more than two years, referring to himself as a student, continued:

Gentlemen, although we are like ignorant children in the knowledge of the transcendence, still His Divine Grace, my Gurudeva, has kindled a small fire within us to dissipate the invincible darkness of the empirical knowledge, and we are so much so on the safe side that no amount of philosophical argument of the empiric schools of thought can deviate us an inch from the position of our eternal dependence on the lotus-feet of His Divine Grace—and we are prepared to challenge the most erudite scholars of the Mayavada school on this vital issue: that the Personality of Godhead and His transcendental sports in Goloka alone constitute the sublime information of the Vedas.

He then ended his speech with an eloquent prayer of submission.

Personally I have no hope to have any direct service for the coming crores of births of the sojourn of my life, but I am confident that some day or other I shall be delivered from this mire of delusion in which I am at present so deeply sunk. Therefore, let me with all my earnestness pray at the lotus-feet of my Divine Master to let me suffer the lot which I am destined to do for all my past misdoings, but to let me have this power of recollection that I am nothing but a tiny servant of the Almighty Absolute Godhead, realised through the unflinching mercy of my Divine Master. Let me, therefore, bow down at his lotus-feet with all the humility at my command.

He submitted both the poem and speech to *The Harmonist*. The poem, Abhay's first publication, announced him as a competent writer in English, and Swami Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha, editor of *The Harmonist*, informally dubbed Abhay as kavi, "learned poet." Some of Abhay's Godbrothers also picked up on the name and began calling him kavi. Most of them, even the sannyāsīs, were not so proficient in English. But Abhay was not ordinary. They could appreciate that the poem was personal, written out of Abhay's genuine worship and his joy at having accepted a genuine spiritual master, but it was also written strictly in accord with the conclusions of the scriptures.

For Abhay, however, the glory of his “Sree Vyas Puja Homage” came when the poem reached Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and it gave him pleasure. One stanza specifically made Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta so happy that he made a point of showing it to all of his guests.

Absolute is sentient

Thou hast proved,

Impersonal calamity

Thou hast moved.

Somehow, in this simple couplet Abhay had captured the essence of his spiritual master's preaching against the Māyāvādīs, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta took it as an indication of how well Abhay knew the mind of his Gurudeva. Abhay was delighted when he heard that the couplet was pleasing to his spiritual master. One of Abhay's Godbrothers compared this verse by Abhay to a verse in which Rūpa Gosvāmī had expressed the inner thinking of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and had thus moved Him to ecstasy.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī also found the essay pleasing, and he showed it to some of his confidential devotees. He instructed the editor of *The Harmonist*, “Whatever he writes, publish it.”

* * *

Abhay thought it only natural that he should have many business enemies or competitors—it was a sign of success. But his Bombay competition caused him to lose another good chance to become wealthy. The “enemy” was the son of Abhay's supervisor at Smith Institute. Both son and father complained to the Smith Institute executives that Abhay Charan De was pushing goods from his own laboratory and not Smith's. By this intrigue, Abhay lost his position with Smith Institute, and his supervisor placed his own son as the new agent. Abhay was again on his own.

While continuing to help his sannyāsī Godbrothers in Bombay, he found a two-story building for rent at Gawlia Tank Road. Everyone agreed it would make a suitable center, and Abhay arranged for the rental and for initial repairs and helped the sannyāsīs move in. It seemed that his endeavors for spiritual things were always successful, whereas his business efforts were consistently failing. Of course, a few business enemies were no cause for discouragement—intrigues and losses were always part of the game, and he was still well known in the pharmaceutical business throughout India. But it wasn't so much the give and take of business that disturbed him as his own doubts about whether this was the best way for him to serve his spiritual master. Business was good only if it could go side by side with his spiritual life. Lord Caitanya had said that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa should be spread to every town and village, and Abhay wanted to assist his spiritual master in fulfilling that prophecy, especially by contributing money and helping establish centers. His earnings should not go solely for his family.

Ideally, family life and spiritual life should progress side by side. But the difficulty was Abhay's wife. She was disturbed over the business losses and apathetic to the spiritual successes. She wanted

to stay within the orbit of home and family, and despite Abhay's suggestions she refused to accept initiation from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. It was his own wife who was his most formidable competitor. And she waged her opposition right in the home, where it was least welcome.

When Abhay occasionally visited his family in Allahabad, he tried to satisfy them with his good intentions. Business had not gone so well in Bombay, but he had new plans, and he assured his family that there was no need to worry. He planned to do more preaching in his home—the whole family could become more involved in spiritual activities. He wanted to invite guests, hold discussions on Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, perform kīrtana, distribute prasādam. He wanted to preach, just as his spiritual master and Godbrothers were preaching. Such a program wouldn't require that a sannyāsī or brahmacārī come and preside. Abhay could do it himself. This would be an example of the ideal household life. But Radharani was unsubmitive. Rather than coming to hear him speak, she stayed with the children in another room—taking tea.

In Bombay, Abhay associated with Śrīdhara Mahārāja and Bhakti sārāṅga Gosvāmī. Both sannyāsīs were highly literate scholars. Śrīdhara Mahārāja was respected for his erudition in the śāstras, and Bhaktisārāṅga Gosvāmī for his writing and preaching in English. Sometimes Abhay would discuss his realizations with them.

Abhay also studied the scriptures on his own—his spiritual master's commentary on the Gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam as well as commentaries by the previous ācāryas. While reading Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on Bhagavad-gītā (Second Chapter, forty-first verse), he read that the disciple should consider the order of the spiritual master to be his life and soul. These words produced a deep effect on Abhay, strengthening his desire to execute Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's command. And in the Eighty-eighth Chapter of the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, he came upon a verse in which Lord Kṛṣṇa said something that startled him:

yasyāham anugṛhṇāmi

hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ

tato 'dhanam tyajanty asya

sva-janā duḥkha-duḥkhitam

“When I feel especially mercifully disposed towards someone, I gradually take away all his material possessions. His friends and relatives then reject this poverty-stricken and most wretched fellow.” Abhay shuddered as he read the verse. It seemed to speak directly to him. But what did it mean? “Does it mean,” he thought, “that Kṛṣṇa will take away all my money?” Was that what was actually happening? Was that why his business plans were failing? He discussed the meaning of the verse with Śrīdhara Mahārāja. Yes, Śrīdhara Mahārāja confirmed, this might very well be what was happening between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Abhay.

* * *

In July 1935, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī came to install the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa and to institute Deity worship at the Bombay center. He was pleased with what his disciples had done so far, and Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja admitted that much of the work was due to Abhay Bābū, who had collected funds and established the new center. "Why is Abhay living separately?" Bhaktisāraṅga asked. "He should be president of this Bombay center."

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī replied, "It is better that he is living outside your company. He will do. When the time comes, he will do everything himself. You don't have to recommend him."

Abhay had not been present when this was spoken, but his Godbrothers told him what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had said. These words of his spiritual master, with their mysteriously prophetic air, were important to Abhay. He treasured the words within himself and meditated upon their meaning.

* * *

In November 1935 he was again with his spiritual master in Vṛndāvana. It was the Karttika season, the ideal time to visit Vṛndāvana, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was staying for a month with his disciples at peaceful Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the sacred lake where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa used to sport.

After leaving Bombay in July, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had gone to Calcutta, where he had spoken on radio, delivered many public lectures, welcomed back the preachers he had sent to Europe, and finished publishing his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam translation and commentary. Then in October he had come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Occupying the small one-story house Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had constructed, he had been reading and speaking to the assembled devotees on the Upaniṣads, Caitanya-caritāmṛta, and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He had also installed Deities at Śrī Kuṅjavihārī Math.

The banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa were overhung with bright green foliage growing from the gnarled branches of ancient tamarind, tamāla, and nim trees. In the shallows of the water, cranes stood on stiltlike legs, while river terns skimmed across the lake, sometimes abruptly diving for fish. Sometimes a tortoise would poke its nose up from the water's depth, or a fish would jump. Green parrots, usually in pairs, flew in and out of the green trees, and sparrows chirped and hopped from place to place. Peacocks were also there, mostly in nearby gardens, as were occasional rabbits and even deer.

The atmosphere was enriched with the history of kṛṣṇa-līlā. Five thousand years ago, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had engaged in transcendental pastimes here, and only five hundred years ago Lord Caitanya had rediscovered Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Lord Caitanya's great follower Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had resided here for many years, constantly chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and discussing the activities of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. And here, in a small bhajana-kuṭīr, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had written Caitanya-caritāmṛta, the narrative of the pastimes of Lord Caitanya that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī relished so much. Many of the inhabitants at Rādhā-kuṇḍa were bābājīs, living in small bhajana-kuṭīrs and spending their time chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Having heard of his spiritual master's stay here, Abhay, bringing his son with him, had traveled from Bombay, just to have darśana of his spiritual master. To see Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was always

an occasion for jubilation, but to see him in Vṛndāvana was an added perfection. This meeting with his beloved guide and friend was different from the time in 1932 when Abhay had seen him on the Vṛndāvana parikrama. Now Abhay was no longer sitting anonymously in the back of a room. Now he was a bona fide disciple, recognized as the “kavi,” who had written the praiseworthy poem and essay, the young man who listened well, the devotee who had helped the Allahabad maṭha and who had established the maṭha in Bombay. Already on this visit Abhay had had occasion to be alone with his spiritual master, who had remembered Abhay's son and presented him with a small bandhī (jacket). And now, as they walked together alone on the bank of Rādhā-kunḍa, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta turned and spoke confidentially to Abhay.

There had been some quarreling amongst his leading disciples in Calcutta, he said, and this distressed him very much. Even now, in Vṛndāvana, it weighed heavily on his mind. Some of his disciples had been fighting over who would use various rooms and facilities at the Gaudiya Math headquarters in Calcutta. These devotees were all members of the same maṭha, and the building was for propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness under the leadership of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Yet even in their spiritual master's presence they were quarreling. Brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas were supposed to be free from envy of any creature, what to speak of envy of one another. If they were to fight now, what would they do after their spiritual master passed away? Abhay had no part in these matters and did not even know the details or who was involved. But as he listened to his spiritual master, he also became distressed.

Deeply concerned, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said to Abhay, “Āgun jvalbe”: “There will be fire”—one day there would be fire in the Calcutta Gaudiya Math, and that fire of party interests would spread and destroy. Abhay heard but did not know what to make of it. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had fought so long and boldly to establish that anyone of any birth could be elevated to become a brāhmaṇa, a sannyāsī, or a Vaiṣṇava. But if his followers became contaminated by a little wealth and the desire for prestige, thereby showing themselves to be still low-class men despite their training and purification, then his mission would be disrupted. If in the name of religion they became attached to ease, position, and prestige, it could only mean that they had failed to grasp the teachings of their spiritual master.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: He was lamenting that these men are simply after the stones and bricks of the building. He condemned. He was very, very sorry.

“When we were living in a rented house,” Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said, “if we could collect two hundred or three hundred rupees we were living very nicely at Ultadanga. We were happier then. But since we have been given this marble palace in Baghbazar, there is friction between our men. Who will occupy this room? Who will occupy that room? Who will be the proprietor of this room? Everyone is planning in different ways. It would be better to take the marble from the walls and secure money. If I could do this and print books, that would be better.”

Abhay felt his spiritual master speaking to him in urgency, as if asking him for help or warning him to avert a disaster. But what could he do?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta then said directly to Abhay, “Āmār icchā chila kichu bai karānā”: “I had a desire to print some books. If you ever get money, print books.” Standing by Rādhā-kunḍa and

beholding his spiritual master, Abhay felt the words deeply enter his own life—"If you ever get money, print books."

* * *

December 1936

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was in poor health at Jagannātha Purī. Abhay was in Bombay, and he wanted to write his Guru Mahārāja a letter. "He is a little kind upon me," Abhay thought. "He will understand my request." And he began to write:

Dear Guru Mahārāja,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. You have got many disciples, and I am one of them, but they are doing direct service to you. Some of them are brahmacharies, some of them are sannyasis, but I am a householder. I cannot. Sometimes I give monetary help, while I cannot give you direct service. Is there any particular service I can do?

Two weeks later, Abhay received a reply.

I am fully confident that you can explain in English our thoughts and arguments to the people who are not conversant with the languages of the other members.

This will do much good to yourself as well as your audience.

I have every hope that you can turn yourself into a very good English preacher if you serve the mission to inculcate the novel impression of Lord Chaitanya's teachings in the people in general as well as philosophers and religionists.

Abhay at once recognized this to be the same instruction he had received at their first meeting, in 1922. He took it as a confirmation. There was now no doubt as to the purpose of his life. What his spiritual master had said in Calcutta in 1922 had not been a chance remark, nor had that been a chance meeting. The instruction was the same: "Turn yourself into a very good English preacher. This will do much good to yourself as well as your audience."

* * *

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta passed away from the mortal world on January 1, 1937. He had been spending his last days reading Caitanya-caritāmṛta and chanting on his beads. When a doctor had visited him, wanting to give him an injection, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had protested, "Why are you disturbing me in this way? Simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, that's all." Amongst his last words to his disciples were,

I advise all to preach the teachings of Rūpa-Raghunātha [disciples of Lord Caitanya] with all energy and resources. Our ultimate goal shall be to become the dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rūpa and Raghunātha Gosvāmīs. You should all work conjointly under the guidance of your spiritual master

with a view to serve the Absolute Knowledge, the Personality of Godhead. You should live somehow or other without any quarrel in this mortal world only for the service of Godhead. Do not, please, give up the service of Godhead, in spite of all dangers, all criticisms, and all discomforts. Do not be disappointed, for most people in the world do not serve the Personality of Godhead; do not give up your own service, which is your everything and all, neither reject the process of chanting and hearing of the transcendental holy name of Godhead. You should always chant the transcendental name of Godhead with patience and forbearance like a tree and humbleness like a straw... There are many amongst you who are well qualified and able workers. We have no other desire whatsoever.

In his last days he had remained fully conscious and had given instructions until the end. He had specifically and openly ordered that the affairs of his Gaudiya Math be maintained by a twelve-man governing body, which the devotees should select amongst themselves. Finally he had said, "Please accept my blessings to you all, present and absent. Please bear in mind that our sole duty and religion is to spread and propagate service to the Lord and of His devotees." At 5:30 A.M. on January 1 he breathed his last.

Word very soon reached Abhay in Bombay. His immediate response was to cry with grief—no more the joy of an anticipated meeting, no more trips to Calcutta or Vṛndāvana on the plea of business just to see the tall, commanding form of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, the "evangelic angel." This sense of never meeting again was difficult to bear. Philosophically, Abhay knew that there was no reason to lament. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had come into the world to execute the mission of Lord Caitanya, and now it was required that he leave this place and go to another, where he would again engage in the same activity. Yet even armed with this philosophy, Abhay felt all alone. His two great well-wishers were gone—his father and now his spiritual master. But he felt grateful that he had received a special mercy, a final instruction, just two weeks before his spiritual master's departure. Abhay read his letter again and again—there would not be another. The intimate talks and meetings were now gone, but by this letter especially, Abhay would live in the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. The letter had come just in time. Now he knew for certain, no matter what anyone else said, how to please his spiritual master and stay linked with Kṛṣṇa. Following his order, he would conquer the feeling of loss at the disappearance of his most affectionate well-wisher.

SPL 5: The War

CHAPTER FIVE

The War

Under the circumstances since 1936 up to now, I was simply speculating whether I shall venture this difficult task and that without any means and capacity; but as none have discouraged me, I have now taken courage to take up the work.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Back to Godhead magazine

The “fire in the maṭha” broke out almost immediately. A senior disciple said that there should be one ācārya who would be the spiritual successor to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and who would perform all initiations and settle all controversies. But Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had never said that. He had never called for one ācārya. Rather, he had instructed the members of the Gaudiya Math to form a governing body of twelve men and carry on a concerted effort. But that instruction was abandoned, and the suggestion that there be one leader took hold. A single person, instead of twelve, should take charge, and now it became a rush for who.

Two parties contested. Ananta Vāsudeva, one of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's leading preachers, was ambitious, and he pressed his claim with a group of influential sannyāsī supporters. Another man, Kuṇjavihārī, shrewdly went after the properties. He had been a leading administrator under Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, and now he claimed ownership of the palatial temple in Calcutta as well as all the other properties and assets of the India-wide Gaudiya Math. Although in his will Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had expressed his desire that his disciples select a governing board to manage all properties and funds of the Gaudiya Math, Kuṇjavihārī contested the will's legitimacy. He and his supporters argued that since Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had received the properties on behalf of God, he was not their rightful owner and therefore could not determine their future ownership. Thus he and the others disputed over the legal and theological aspects of the former ācārya's position.

Shortly after Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's passing away, litigation had begun. Ananta Vāsudeva, supported by a majority of the members of the Gaudiya Math, had claimed that he, as the next ācārya, was the owner and director of the properties. But although Kuṇjavihārī had only a few supporters, he defied the majority by pressing his claim through lawyers in court. Kuṇjavihārī and his men had possession of the Caitanya Math and the temples in Māyāpur. Vāsudeva's party captured other buildings. Quarreling and fistfights broke out. The preaching of the Gaudiya Math stopped.

Abhay's inability to take part in the activities of the Gaudiya Math was suddenly in his favor. He had always been more a visitor than a member at the maṭha and, at least externally, more the gr̥hastha businessman than a missionary worker. This automatically put him at a distance from the fray. Of course, he was associated with the maṭhas in Bombay and Allahabad, but he had no managerial position, no claims to ownership, and no role in the litigation. Nor did he desire to take sides in the struggle for power. Like many of the other disciples, he was mortified to see that his spiritual master's instructions for cooperation had been disregarded and his mission thrown into a legal dispute. Abhay knew that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had wanted the leaders to work cooperatively, and so he could not sympathize with the warring factions. Both parties were an insult to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

But he wanted to preach. Although becoming “a very good English preacher” was something he was meditating on more than actively doing, the Gaudiya Math would logically have been the vehicle for his preaching. He had already contributed articles to the Gaudiya Math's publications and had been working with his Godbrothers at the Allahabad and Bombay centers. Naturally he thought of serving his spiritual master in terms of serving within his spiritual master's mission. But the Gaudiya Math, which had always been known for pure, bold preaching of the message of Lord Caitanya, was now becoming known for embroiled factions. As the Gaudiya Math broke down, he

was also affected. Under the present circumstances, how could he carry out his spiritual master's order to preach? Previously the main obstacle to his preaching had been family commitments, but now the obstacles were compounded. Now he had to wait helplessly for the outcome of this struggle. What would Kṛṣṇa bring about?

* * *

1938

His Bombay business diminishing, Abhay, now forty-two, moved back to Calcutta with his wife and family and rented a house at 6 Sita Kanta Banerjee Lane. The street was but a narrow lane, lined on either side with three-story houses. His office was on the first floor, facing the street; the family lived upstairs. He rented the adjoining building, number seven, and on the first floor operated a small chemical laboratory manufacturing distilled water, De's Pain Liniment, Vimal Tonic, Alpa (an injection for boils), and various other medicines. He also utilized a small outbuilding in the rear as part of his lab. Out front he hung a large signboard—Abhay Charan De and Sons—displaying a picture of a mustached Abhay Charan.

Sometimes he would employ two or three servants to assist him, but mostly he worked alone. And he would deliver his glass jugs of distilled water to agents, such as Bengal Company and Gluconet. He printed a brochure advertising De's Pain Liniment: "Good for relieving gout, rheumatism, and all pains." And if one wanted to be free of recurring diseases like rheumatism and gout, Abhay's brochure directed that in addition to using De's Pain Liniment one refrain from "alcohol and all sorts of drinking or intoxicating habits, and food and drink should be very simple and innocent such as vegetables and milk."

The new Calcutta business enjoyed an early success, but Abhay didn't have his heart in it. It was a duty—he had to do it to maintain his family. His new acquaintances in Calcutta found him to be a devotee of God at heart—a businessman, a family man, but more concerned with writing and preaching than with business and family.

Chandi Mukerjee (a neighbor from nearby Bihari Street): He was interested only in devotional activities, and he did his business only to maintain the family. He didn't seem interested in the profit motive, in accumulating money or becoming a rich man.

Charan Mukerjee (Abhay's next-door neighbor): Abhay Charan De was always a very patient listener to every illogical argument that anybody, including myself, would bring to him. Not knowing philosophy, I would illogically present so many arguments, and Mr. De would always very patiently listen. Nothing agitated him. He was always very calm, and he taught me about God. He would speak only of Kṛṣṇa. He was translating the Gītā and was maintaining his business.

Neighbors would often see him sitting on his cot in the front room. He would read his spiritual master's books and sometimes recite the Sanskrit śloka out loud. He liked to discuss philosophy with anyone who came by. His family keeping mostly upstairs, Abhay would sit alone in the downstairs front room, dressed in dhotī and kurtā, or sometimes a dhotī and only a vest. Often he

would be at his writing, while outside the door his children played with the children of the Ganguli family, who lived in the rear apartment of the same building.

The neighbors lived openly in a kind of joint neighborhood family, and Abhay talked freely with the other neighbors—but of Vaiṣṇava philosophy and only rarely of business. Mr. Ganguli found Abhay's speech “scholastic and always very philosophical.” Abhay was absorbed in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and even in brief conversations he would refer to Lord Kṛṣṇa and to Bhagavad-gītā's description of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the basis of both the material and spiritual worlds. While working in his laboratory, or receiving a delivery of empty bottles from the Muslim bottle merchant, or going out to sell his medicine, he would be talking or thinking about God.

In those days, for a person in Calcutta to be interested in God consciousness was not so unusual. Abhay found even a man like Abdullah, the Muslim bottle merchant, to be very religious. One day Abhay asked Abdullah, who had once been very poor but had become rich by his business, “Now you've got money. So how are you going to use your money?” The bottle merchant replied, “My dear sir, I have an intention to construct a mosque.”

* * *

Meanwhile, the war of the Gaudiya Math raged on. Both factions were ill-motivated, and both deviated from the instructions of their spiritual master. The very act of trying to determine ownership of the properties through legal action meant that the Godbrothers were disobeying the express desire of their spiritual master, as stated in his will. The litigation continued year after year, but the legal wrangling could not bring them together or purify them. One court ruled in favor of Ananta Vāsudeva, but then a higher court awarded two thirds of the maṭha's properties to Kuṅjavihārī and one third to Vāsudeva. Still, although Vāsudeva had fewer properties, he inspired more followers—he seemed to them more intent on reviving the preaching of the Gaudiya Math. But when Vāsudeva subsequently fell down from the principles of sannyāsa by going off with a woman, the groups broke further to pieces.

Most of the sannyāsīs continued to maintain their principles, but many now left the jurisdiction of the two contending factions in disgust. Individuals formed their own āśramas: Gaudiya Mission, Caitanya Gaudiya Math, and others. The unified entity of Gaudiya Math as an all-India mission consisting of many temples, several presses, and hundreds of devotees working cooperatively under one leadership ceased to exist. Godbrothers continued to uphold the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu as they had received them from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, but because they were meant to work together, they lacked their former united potency. Illusions of proprietorship and prestige had superseded the spiritual master's order, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's cause—a worldwide movement for propagating Lord Caitanya's teachings—collapsed.

* * *

Wherever Abhay went he seemed to attract the company of his Godbrothers. Some followers of Śrīdhara Mahārāja—the same Śrīdhara with whom he had worked in Bombay and whom he had always regarded as a good devotee and scholar—met Abhay at his place on Banerjee Lane and told this news to Śrīdhara Mahārāja, who was then living at his own āśrama in Māyāpur. Śrīdhara

Mahārāja had disaffiliated himself from the factions of the Gaudiya Maṭh, but as a sannyāsī he was still preaching and was interested in publishing Vaiṣṇava literature. He had wanted to maintain an āśrama in Calcutta, so for twenty rupees a month he rented from Abhay the four rooms on the second floor of number seven, above Abhay's chemical laboratory.

Now, whenever they came to Calcutta, Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Purī Mahārāja, and Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja based themselves there, staying in small separate rooms. It became a regular āśrama for sannyāsīs and brahmacārīs, and Śrīdhara Mahārāja put a sign out front: Devānanda Sarasvatī Math.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja's establishment of a maṭha in Māyāpur with a branch in Calcutta was his response to the Gaudiya Math's split. Like other sannyāsīs, he had been initiating disciples and preaching, not waiting for the outcome of the litigation, with its continued appeals and counterclaims. Abhay was glad to encourage Śrīdhara Mahārāja and the others who joined him at his little āśrama. Here Abhay and Śrīdhara Mahārāja and his followers could remain aloof from the warring factions and together pursue their plans for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The sannyāsīs cooked in their separate kitchen, performed their pūjā, and held morning and evening kīrtanas and lectures. Abhay remained with his family, taking his own meals and performing his own pūjā, but he often went to discuss Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam with Śrīdhara Mahārāja. From his roof, Abhay could see the towering steeple of his spiritual master's building, the Gaudiya Math of Baghbazār, its ownership now contested by bitter factions.

Abhay would often accompany Śrīdhara Mahārāja and his assistants at preaching programs, where he would play the mṛdaṅga. And when Śrīdhara Mahārāja fell ill, Abhay led the other devotees on preaching engagements, performing kīrtana, playing mṛdaṅga, and giving lectures on the Bhāgavatam.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: We did not see Abhay as working very hard for making money, nor did he seem very rich or to have a lot of liquid funds. He was attracted more to the spiritual side of affairs than to his family affairs. He never discussed business prospects with me—whether the business was up or down, or whether he was planning to do this or that. Monetarily, he did not have sufficient funds for giving any to the mission.

* * *

Abhay began to think seriously about writing Vaiṣṇava literature. His spiritual master had seemed very pleased and had told the editor of *The Harmonist*, "Whatever he writes, publish it." Business profits, if he could somehow expand them, could go for printing books in English, as his spiritual master had said. "If you ever get money, print books." Certainly the Gaudiya Math was not going to do it; Kuṅjavihārī had sold Bhaktisiddhānta's printing presses to offset his legal expenses. No, Abhay would have to continue on his own, maintaining his business and simultaneously trying to write and publish. And that was also the prescription of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta: "It is better that he is living outside your company. When the time comes, he will do everything himself."

It was in 1939 that Abhay wrote "Introduction to Geetopanishad." It was a short piece, but it signaled his intention to take on the task of one day translating Bhagavad-gītā into English with

commentary. Of course, there were already many commentaries in English, but most of them had been written by impersonalists or others who had not delivered the original spirit of the Gītā, the spirit of Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra hearing Bhagavad-gītā directly from Lord Kṛṣṇa. Abhay knew, however, that he could present Bhagavad-gītā in the proper spirit by writing an English commentary based on the teachings of Lord Caitanya and the disciplic succession. So he began. Whenever he could make time, he would write. Although a strict grammarian could find fault in his English composition, his meaning was always clear.

In his "Introduction," Abhay reflected on the time when as a young schoolboy he had attended a lecture, "Vidyā-ratna—The Jewel of Education." The theme of the lecture had been that God does not exist and could not exist. If there were God, He would certainly have appeared on earth to put an end to all religious rivalry; but since God had not obliged man in this way, we should banish all thought of His existence from our minds. The audience, Abhay explained, consisting only of so many young boys, did not delve deeply into the subject matter of the lecture, yet the majority, impressed by the arguments, "carried away lofty ideas of godlessness, and thus became agnostics at home."

Abhay had not been satisfied with the agnostic conclusion, "because I had been trained by my father to be engaged in the worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. But as a result of the Vidyā-ratna lecture, I was experiencing some mental conflict between agnosticism and the existence of Godhead." Later, having heard from his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, Abhay understood that the Personality of Godhead exists in every sphere of activity. "But we do not have the eyes to see Him," Abhay wrote. "Even if the Lord personally manifests Himself on earth, the quarreling mundaners will not stop their fighting and look upon Godhead or His representative, due to ignorance. This is the birthright of the individual soul by the grace of God."

Bhagavad-gītā is the true "jewel of education." And in the Gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa "declares to the fighting people on earth, "Here I am. Do not quarrel.'" The agnostic who had spoken of the "jewel of education" had been blinded by the jewel and therefore could not see and appreciate the Personality of Godhead. Thus he had gone on to convince others to become so-called jewels also.

Following his spiritual master, Abhay displayed an aggressive spirit for confronting all opponents of pure theism. In responding to his spiritual master's order to develop into an English preacher, Abhay was not simply making neutral scholarly presentations; he was willing and ready to fight—whether against modern agnostics or Vaiṣṇavism's old, traditional enemy, Māyāvāda impersonalism.

Although few scholars taught the way of surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa, as espoused in Bhagavad-gītā, almost all respected Bhagavad-gītā as presenting the essence of all knowledge. The Gītā, therefore, was the perfect vehicle for confronting those who misrepresented God and religion. The Gītā was a "challenge to the agnostics, apotheosists, anthropomorphists, impersonalists, henotheists, pantheists, and absolute monists." Although there were already more than six hundred commentaries on Bhagavad-gītā, they had been written by persons with "an inner hatred for the Personality of Godhead," and therefore they were imperfect. "Such envious persons," Abhay wrote, "have no entrance into the real meaning of Bhagwat Geeta inasmuch as a fly cannot enter into the covered jar of honey."

Abhay described Indian culture as an almost impassable ocean, due to its depth of thought and apparent mixtures of conclusions. "But in this book," Abhay declared, "I will establish that Krishna is the Absolute Personality of Godhead by referring to the available records of scriptures which are the recorded history of Indian culture and thought."

The sannyāsīs at 7 Banerjee Lane were impressed by the scope of Abhay's thought and intentions. As it was customary to award a title to an especially worthy Vaiṣṇava according to his qualities, Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī wanted to confer upon Abhay the title Bhaktisiddhānta. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, however, thought it inappropriate to give Abhay the same title as their spiritual master, and he asked that Abhay's title be changed to Bhaktivedānta, bhakti meaning "devotion" and vedānta meaning "the end of knowledge." Abhay was grateful. The title combined the devotion of religion with the scholarship of the most rigorous philosophy, as passed down by the scholarly followers of Lord Caitanya. He appreciated the sincere gesture of his Godbrothers and accepted the title as a further commitment to his spiritual path of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Abhay continued regularly associating with Śrīdhara Mahārāja and discussing with him Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Abhay encouraged him to preach widely, although Śrīdhara Mahārāja was admittedly more the scholar and rather shy about going out and preaching. On several occasions, Abhay tried to convince Śrīdhara Mahārāja to go with him and charge Gandhi and Nehru as to why they weren't following the principles of Bhagavad-gītā.

Another fruit of the spiritual association at 7 Banerjee Lane was a book called Prapanna-jīvanāmṛta, compiled by Śrīdhara Mahārāja. A collection of verses from various Vaiṣṇava scriptures, including excerpts from the works of Rūpa Gosvāmī, it was divided into six chapters, according to the six divisions of surrender. Abhay, along with the sannyāsīs of the Devānanda Sarasvatī Math, financed the publication. Thus it was published as a joint effort by friends.

* * *

September 3, 1939

Lord Linlithgow, viceroy of India, announced that India was at war with Germany. Thus England swept India into the war—without consulting any Indians. Although independence-minded India certainly resented such a show of foreign control, there were mixed feelings about the war. India wanted independence, yet she sympathized with the allied cause against fascism in the West and feared an invasion by imperial Japan in the East. "Since you dislike the British so violently," one author asked a typical New Delhi student of the day, "would you want Japan to invade and conquer India?" Student: "No, but we Indians pray that God may give the British enough strength to stand up under the blows they deserve."

Although at the outbreak of the war India had only 175,000 men in her armed forces, the British managed to increase the number of Indian soldiers to two million. There was no draft, but the British sent recruiting agents all over India, especially in the Punjab, where military service seemed an attractive offer to the local poor. The Punjabis proved good fighters, whereas Bengalis enlisted as

officers, doctors, contractors, and clerks. Indian soldiers were dispatched to battlefields in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Persia, Malaya, Burma, and Assam.

While the British were attempting to mobilize Indians for the war, the Indian nationalist movement, which had continued off and on for more than twenty years, became very active. Members of the Congress Party refused to cooperate with the war effort and demanded guaranteed independence for India. Some thought that since England had her hands full with Germany, the time was ripe to revolt and gain independence by force. Gandhi's position had been one of unconditional pacifism, and he had opposed the idea of Indians taking up arms, even to defend India. But by 1942 he had become more inimical and had reduced his policy towards the British to a simple, unequivocal "Quit India!" Thousands of Indians responded by chanting slogans in the street and even by tearing up the railway lines.

Abhay's militant former schoolmate Subhas Chandra Bose fought against the British in his own way. He had approached Hitler in Germany and gotten him to agree that when the Germans captured Indian soldiers, Germany would return them to Bose, who would maintain them in his nationalist army. With this army Bose planned to return to India and drive the British from Indian soil. But dissatisfied with his progress in Germany, Bose made a similar agreement with Tojo in Japan, and soon thousands of Gurkhas and Sikhs (the best fighters in the Indian army) had defected from the British army to join Bose's freedom fighters in Singapore. Bose began to prepare his army to invade India from the north.

Then in 1943 the British found that the Japanese, who had already taken Burma, were at the doors of India, approaching Bengal. By their tactic known as the "denial policy," the British sank many Indian boats carrying food and destroyed large rice crops, fearing that they would fall into the hands of the enemy. This left local Indians starving and without the boats they needed for trade. The famine that ensued was the worst that had hit Bengal in 150 years. The government removed all control of food costs, and those who could not afford to buy at the skyrocketing prices died in the streets of Calcutta.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I have got experience—the government created artificial famine. The war was going on, so Mr. Churchill's policy was to keep the people in scarcity so they will volunteer to become soldiers. So this policy was executed. Big men, they collected the rice. Rice was selling at six rupees per mound. All of a sudden it came to fifty rupees per mound. I was in the grocer shop purchasing, and all of a sudden the grocer said, "No, no. I am not going to sell any more!" At that moment the price was six rupees per mound. So suddenly he was not going to sell. A few hours later, I went back to purchase, and the rice had gone up to fifty rupees per mound.

The government-appointed agents began to purchase the rice and other commodities which are daily necessities. They can offer any price, because the currency is in their hands. They can print so-called papers, a hundred dollars, and pay. A man becomes satisfied, thinking, "Oh, I have a hundred dollars." But it is a piece of paper...

That was the policy. "You have no money, no rice? So another avenue is open—yes, you become a soldier. You get so much money." People, out of poverty, would go there. I have seen it. No rice was available in the market. And people were hungry. They were dying.

Abhay managed to purchase just enough for his own family to survive. But he saw the beggar population increase by the hundreds. Month after month he saw the footpaths and open spaces congested with beggars, cooking their food on improvised stoves and sleeping in the open or beneath the trees. He saw starving children rummaging in the dustbins for a morsel of food. From there it was but a step to fighting with the dogs for a share of the garbage, and this also became a familiar sight in the Calcutta streets. The British had little time to spare from their war efforts, and they worked only to save those lives essential for the fight. For the common people the empire's prescription was uniform and simple—starvation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: One American gentleman was present at that time. He remarked, "People are starving in this way. In our country there would have been revolution." Yes, but the people of India are so trained that in spite of artificial famine they did not commit theft, stealing others' property. People were dying. Still they thought, "All right. God has given." That was the basic principle of Vedic civilization.

Abhay knew that under the laws of nature there was no scarcity; by God's arrangement the earth could produce enough food. The trouble was man's greed. "There is no scarcity in the world," Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said. "The only scarcity is of Kṛṣṇa consciousness." And this was how Abhay saw the 1943 famine. Now more than ever, this spiritual vision was relevant—Kṛṣṇa consciousness was the prime necessity. How else could man be checked from his evil propensities to become greedy, hoard, make war, and thus create misery for millions?

He had seen the heinous activities of the British in India—their cutting off the thumbs of the weavers so that Indian-made cotton goods could not compete with the foreign-made cloth, their shooting down of unarmed, innocent citizens, their creating artificial famine, their propagating the myth that Indian civilization was primitive—still, he did not believe that an independent Indian government would necessarily be an improvement. Unless the leadership was Kṛṣṇa conscious—and neither Gandhi nor Subhas Chandra Bose was—then the government would be able to provide no real solutions, only stopgap measures. Without obedience to the laws of God, as expressed by the scriptures and sages, governments would only increase human suffering.

Then Calcutta was bombed, day after day. The bombing was concentrated in specific areas, such as the Kittapur port facility and Syama Bazaar in north Calcutta, very near Abhay's home at Sita Kanta Banerjee Lane. American planes had been leaving from airfields near Calcutta for targets in China and Japan, so the air raids on Calcutta seemed an inevitable retaliation. It was the Japanese striking back.

Or was it? Some said it was the forces of Subhas Chandra Bose, since the bombs fell mostly in the European quarter. But for the people of Calcutta it made little difference who was attacking. After the first bombing, people evacuated the city. Blackouts were imposed, and at night the entire city was dark.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The whole Calcutta became vacant. Perhaps only myself and a few others remained. I sent my sons to Navadvīpa—of course, my daughter was married. My wife refused to go out of Calcutta. She said, "I'll be bombed, but I will not go." So I had to remain in Calcutta. I have

seen bombing in Calcutta all night. I was just eating when there was the siren. So, the arrangement was that... in your house would be the shelter room. I was hungry, so I first finished eating. Then I went to the room, and the bombing began. Chee—Kyam! I was thinking that this was also Kṛṣṇa in another form. But that form was not very lovable.

* * *

In the midst of these calamities, Abhay felt more than ever the need to propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He had something to say to the war-weary citizens of the world, and he longed for a more effective forum—a publication of some kind, a way to present the world's crises through the eyes of scripture in the same bold style as had his spiritual master. There was no shortage of ideas, and he had been saving money from his business for this very purpose.

Yet how could he dare produce such a journal when even learned sannyāsīs, senior disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, were not. He never considered himself a great scholar among his Godbrothers. Although they called him kavi and now Bhaktivedānta, as a gṛhastha he wasn't expected to take the lead or publish his own journal.

But times had changed. The English journal *The Harmonist* had not been published since before Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's passing away. Now almost a decade had passed, and the Gaudiya Math had been too busy fighting in court to consider preaching. Long gone was the tireless spirit that for ten consecutive years had produced the daily *Nadiyā Prakāśa*. No longer were four separately located printing presses pumping out transcendental literature under the direction of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's empowered son; the presses had been sold by Kuṅjavihārī. Times had changed. The Gaudiya Math was only fighting, while the nondevotees were killing each other in a world war.

From his front room at 6 Sita Kanta Banerjee, Abhay conceived, wrote, edited, and typed the manuscript for a magazine. He designed a logo, a long rectangle across the top of the page. In the upper left-hand corner was a figure of Lord Caitanya, effulgent with rays of light like rays from the sun. In the lower right were silhouettes of a crowd of people, in darkness but groping to receive light from Lord Caitanya. And between Lord Caitanya and the people, the title unfurled like a banner—BACK TO GODHEAD. In the lower right corner was a picture of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī seated at his writing, looking up thoughtfully as he composed. Above the logo ran the motto “Godhead is Light, Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no Nescience.” Below the logo were the following lines:

EDITED & FOUNDED

(Under the direct order of His Divine Grace

Sri Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupāda)

By Mr. ABHAY CHARAN DE.

Abhay had already gained some printing experience in connection with his business, and after completing the manuscript he brought it to Saraswatī Press, the best printers in Bengal. He also

hired an agent, Calcutta's prestigious booksellers Thacker, Spink and Company, who would take responsibility for distributing the journal to bookstores and libraries, including outlets in several foreign countries.

But when he went to buy paper, he met with government restrictions. Because of the war and the subsequent paper shortage, they wanted to assay what he had written in terms of the national needs; during this time of world crisis, an ordinary citizen's religious newspaper was hardly top priority.

Abhay's request for paper was perfunctorily denied, but he persisted. He appealed that using paper to print the teachings of the Personality of Godhead was not a waste and not untimely in the present troubled atmosphere. Finally he obtained permission to print his first edition of *Back to Godhead*, a forty-four page publication.

Abhay Charan greeted his readers by defining his motto: "Godhead is Light, Nescience is darkness." When man forgets that he is the son of Godhead and identifies himself with the body, then he's in ignorance. He's like a man who's very concerned with the automobile's mechanism yet with no knowledge of the driver.

The defect of the present day civilisation is just like that. This is actually the civilisation of Nescience or illusion and therefore civilisation has been turned into militarisation. Everyone is fully concerned with the comforts of the body and everything related with the body and no one is concerned with the Spirit that moves the body although even a boy can realise that the motor-car mechanism has little value if there is no driver of the car. This dangerous ignorance of humanity is a gross Nescience and has created a dangerous civilisation in the form of militarisation. This militarisation which, in softer language, is Nationalisation is an external barrier to understanding human relations. There is no meaning in a fight where the parties do fight only for the matter of different coloured dresses. There must be therefore an understanding of human relation without any consideration of the bodily designation or coloured dresses.

"BACK TO GODHEAD" is a feeble attempt by the undersigned under the direction of His Divine Grace Sri Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupāda, the celebrated founder and organiser of the Gaudiya Math activities—just to bring up a real relation of humanity with central relation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

That there is a great and urgent need of a literature like this is keenly felt by the leaders of all countries and the following statements will help much in the procedure.

It was 1944, and Abhay specifically addressed the crisis of world war. The world's political leaders were expressing their disgust at their people's suffering and scarcity. After four years of fighting, costing millions of human lives, the second world war within twenty years was still scourging the earth. Although the end was in sight, leaders expressed not so much happiness and hope as weariness and uncertainty. Even if this war ended, would there be yet another war? Had man not yet grasped the vital lesson of how to live in peace?

Abhay quoted the Archbishop of India: "India guided by God can lead the world back to sanity." He quoted the President of the United States: "A programme, therefore, of moral re-armament for the world cannot fail to lessen the dangers of armed conflict. Such moral re-armament, to be most highly effective, must receive support on a world wide basis." He mentioned former President Herbert Hoover, who had affirmed that the world needs to return to moral and spiritual ideals, and he quoted a resolution by the British House of Commons affirming that spiritual principles are the common heritage of all people and that men and nations urgently need to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. He quoted Wendell Willkie, who, after his return from Russia, had reported millions of Russians killed, wounded, or missing in the war and millions more suffering from a winter of terrible scarcity and subjugation.

"What is true for the Russian people," Abhay wrote, "is also true for other people, and we Indians are feeling the same scarcity, the same want, and the same disgust." He quoted Britain's foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, who had been filled with lamentation and indignation at the miseries of war. He quoted the Archbishop of Canterbury:

In every quarter of earth men long to be delivered from the curse of War and to find in a world which has regained its peace, respite from the harshness and bitterness of the world they have known till now. But so often they want the Kingdom of Heaven without its King. The kingdom of God without God. And they cannot have it.

OUR RESOLVE MUST BE BACK TO GOD. We make plans for the future for peace amongst the nation and for civil security at home. That is quite right enough and it would be wrong to neglect it. But all our plans will come to ship-wreck on the rock of human selfishness unless we turn to God. BACK TO GOD, that is the chief need of England and of every nation.

He also quoted Sir Francis Younghusband of Britain: "Now that religion is everywhere attacked brutally, we look to India, the very home of religion, for a sign." And finally he quoted Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan:

This war, when it would be won, would prove to be the breeding ground of other wars if the peace was not saved. It could happen only if powerful nations ceased to take pride and glory in their possessions which were based on labour and tribute of other weaker nations. This perhaps was what Sir Harcourt Butler meant when he said that the principles of Hinduism contained the essential elements for the saving of world civilisations.

And in another quote from Dr. Radhakrishnan, Abhay offered a statement he also used as one of the mottoes of the magazine:

We have to defeat tyranny in the realm of thought and create a will for world peace. Instruments for training the mind and educating human nature should be used to develop a proper social outlook without which institutional machinery was of little use.

Abhay expressed his confidence that the spiritual resources of India could be used by everyone, not only to enhance the glory of India but to benefit the whole world.

Next he told how he had come to begin *Back to Godhead* magazine—how he had written a letter two weeks before the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and how his spiritual master had instructed him to preach in English.

Under the circumstances since 1936 up to now, I was simply speculating whether I shall venture this difficult task and that without any means and capacity; but as none have discouraged me... I have now taken courage to take up the work... But at the present moment my conscience is dictating me to take up the work although the difficulties are not over for the present situation arising out of War conditions.

Abhay stated that his paper would contain only the transcendental messages of the great sages of India, especially Lord Caitanya, and that his duty would be simply to repeat them, just like a translator. He would not manufacture anything, and so his words would descend as transcendental sound for guiding people back to Godhead. He admitted that the subject matters of *Back to Godhead*, being from a totally different sphere of consciousness, might seem dry to his readers, but he held that anyone who actually gave attention to his message would benefit.

Sugar-candy is never sweet to those who are suffering from the disease of the bile. But still, sugar-candy is the medicine for bilious patients. The taste of sugar-candy will gradually be revived if the bilious patient goes on taking sugar-candy regularly for the cure of the disease. We recommend the same process to the readers of "*Back to Godhead*."

Abhay focused on presenting the timeless message of the Vedas, but in the context of current crises. In his essay "*Godhead and His Potentialities*," he presented Vedic evidence and logical arguments to explain the transcendental nature of Godhead and the individual souls, both being deathless, blissful, and full of knowledge. Because men have forgotten and neglected their vital connection with God, they can never be satisfied in the material world, which is temporary and beset with unavoidable miseries. As spiritual souls, everyone is eternal by nature, and therefore everyone tries to avoid the onslaught of distresses and dangers, which come one after another. But the material body is meant for suffering and ultimately for destruction.

The exodus of the residents of Calcutta to other places out of fear of being raided by the Japanese bombs, is due to the same tendency of nondestructible existence. But those who are thus going away, do not remember that even after going away from Calcutta saved from the raids of the Japanese bombs, they are unable to protect their bodies as non-destructible in any part of the material universe, when the same bodies will be raided by the bombs of material nature in the form of threefold miseries.

The Japanese also—who are threatening the Calcutta people with ruthless air-raids for increasing their own happiness by possession of lands—do not know that their happiness is also temporary and destructible as they have repeatedly experienced in their own fatherland. The living beings, on the other hand, who are designed to be killed, are by nature eternal, impenetrable, invisible, etc. So all those living entities who are threatened to be killed as well as those who are threatening to conquer are all alike in the grip of the "*Maya*" potency and are therefore in the darkness.

Abhay wrote that never by their own devices could men escape the conditions of destruction. So many world leaders were seeking relief from the war, but all were useless, because their attempts for peace were within the material conception of life. Their attempts were like attempts to alleviate darkness with darkness; but darkness can be removed only by light.

Without light, any amount of speculation of the human mind (which is also a creation of the material nature) can never restore the living entities to permanent happiness. In that darkness any method of bringing peace in the world... can bring only temporary relief or distress, as we can see from all creations of the External Potency. In the darkness non-violence is as much useless as violence, while in the light there is no need of violence or non-violence.

Abhay did not deal exclusively with the war. In "Theosophy Ends in Vaishnavism," he criticized the shortcomings of the fashionable ideas of Theosophy, which the followers of Madame Blavatsky had popularized in India.

In "Congregational Chanting," he upheld the scriptural prediction that the saṅkīrtana movement of Lord Caitanya would spread to every town and village on the surface of the earth.

From this foretelling we can hope that the cult of Samkirtan will take very shortly a universal form of religious movement, and this universal religion—wherein there is no harm in chanting the Name of the Lord nor is there any question of quarrel—will continue for years, as we can know from the pages of authoritative scriptures.

The central theme of Back to Godhead was clearly the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. In its cover with its picture of a thoughtful Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, in its "Dedication," in its statement of the magazine's purpose, in its handling of issues, its analysis of Theosophy, its prediction of the spread of saṅkīrtana—in its every aspect, the theme of Back to Godhead was the order of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

There were also four shorter essays by other contributors, including Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī.

An advertisement on the back cover highlighted

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And a second major work: Lord Chaitanya, in two parts, totaling one thousand pages. Neither of these manuscripts was actually near completion, but Abhay was expressing his eagerness to undertake such large works on behalf of his spiritual master.

In attempting to print the second issue of Back to Godhead, Abhay encountered the same difficulty as before. Twice he requested permission to purchase newsprint, and twice the government denied his request. Paper was restricted on account of the war. On July 10, 1944, Abhay wrote a third letter.

With due respect, I beg to submit that under the instruction of His Divine Grace, Sri Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Maharaj, the spiritual head of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas, I had to start a paper under the caption, "Back to Godhead." The very name will suggest the intention of starting such a paper in the midst of heavy turmoil through which the world is now passing. A copy of the same booklet is sent herewith for your kind perusal. In that booklet you shall find strong world opinions, even by many reputed politicians all over the world, in favour of such a movement to bring back the world into sanity by training the mind and educating human nature for the unshaking spiritual plane, considered to be the supreme need of humankind. I hope you will kindly go through the paper by making some time and I may draw your attention specially to the introductory portion.

Abhay also remarked that the editorial board of Back to Godhead felt that there was not so much a scarcity of paper as a scarcity of education. Taking the opportunity to preach, Abhay explained that although the ultimate supplier was the Personality of Godhead, godless men consider themselves the proprietors of all things.

Catastrophe that is now in vogue in the present war of supremacy, is guided by this false sense of proprietorship and therefore there is need of making propaganda amongst all human beings, in order to bring them back to the sense of the ultimate proprietorship of Godhead...

Abhay conceded that there might indeed be a paper shortage in India. But in ancient times, he wrote, enlightened Indians had regularly sacrificed tons of valuable ghee and grains in the fire during religious sacrifices, and in those times there had not been any scarcity. People now, however, having abandoned all sacrifices to the Supreme Lord, were producing only scarcity.

Can we not therefore sacrifice a few reams of paper in the midst of many wastages, for the same purpose in order to derive greater benefit for the humankind? I request that the Government should take up this particular case in the light of spiritualism which is not within the material calculation. Even in Great Britain the Government has immensely supported a similar movement called The Moral Re-Armament Movement without consideration of the scarcity of paper which is more acute there than here.

Let there be a page only if not more for the publication of "Back to Godhead" for which we do not mind but my earnest request is that the Government should at least let there be a ventilation of the atmosphere for which my paper "Back to Godhead" [is] meant. Kindly therefore give it a serious consideration and allow me to start even by one page every weekly or monthly as you think best without thinking it as ordinary waste of paper, for the sake of humanity and Godhead.

The letter was successful. Now, with veiled sarcasm, he headlined his second issue, "Thanks to the Government of India." He informed his readers, many of whom had been disappointed to learn that the government had curtailed his printing, that he would be able to continue his magazine every month. Abhay printed his letter to the government paper officer and also the reply granting him permission.

His articles were shorter, this time displaying the flair of a news columnist, as with philosophical criticism, verve, and a touch of ironic humor he commented on world leaders and crises. "Gandhi-Jinnah Talks," "Mr. Churchill's "Humane World," "Mr. Bernard Shaw's Wishful Desire," and "Spontaneous Love of Godhead" comprised the issue.

"Gandhi-Jinnah Talks": "We are sorry to learn that Gandhi-Jinnah talks about unity of the Indian people have failed for the present." Abhay was not very optimistic about the results of such "occasional talks between several heads of communities." Even if they made a successful solution, it would break up and take the shape of another problem. They were looking for unity between Muslims and Hindus, but in Europe the fighting parties were Christians, and in Asia they were mostly Buddhists—but still they were fighting. "So fighting will go on between Hindu and Mohammedan, between Hindus and Hindus or between Mohammedan and Mohammedan, between Christians and Christians and between Buddhist and Buddhist till the day of annihilation." As long as there was the contaminated self-interest of sense gratification, there would be fighting between brother and brother, father and son, and nation and nation. Real unity would stand only on a plane of transcendental service to the Supreme. "Mahatma Gandhi," Abhay wrote, "is far above ordinary human being and we have all respects for him." But Abhay advised Gandhi to give up his activities on the material plane and rise to the transcendental plane of the spirit—then there could be talks about the unity of all people. Abhay cited Bhagavad-gītā's definition of a mahātmā: one who concentrates his attention on the service of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He requested Mahatma Gandhi to adhere to the teachings of Bhagavad-gītā and preach its message of surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In this way, Mahatma Gandhi, through his influential

position in the world, could bring about universal relief, simply by preaching the message of Bhagavad-gītā.

"Mr. Churchill's "Humane World":

We are pleased to find that leaders of world politics such as Mr. Churchill have nowadays begun to think of a humane world and trying to get rid of the terrible national frenzy of hate. The frenzy of hatred is another side of the frenzy of love. The frenzy of love of Hitler's own countrymen has produced the concomitant frenzy of hatred for others and the present war is the result of such dual side of a frenzy called love and hatred. So when we wish to get rid of the frenzy of hate, we must be prepared to get rid of the frenzy of so-called love. This position of equilibrium free from love and hatred is attained only when men are sufficiently educated.

Until men were educated to see the soul within the body, the dual frenzy of love and hate would continue, and a humane world would not be possible. "This introspection," Abhay concluded, "is... easily attained by the service of Godhead. So Mr. Churchill's Humane World implies that we must go "Back to Godhead."

"Mr. Bernard Shaw's Wishful Desire":

Mr. Bernard Shaw has congratulated Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of the latter's 76th birthday in the following words: "I can only wish this were Mr. Gandhi's 35th birthday instead of his 76th." We heartily join with Mr. Shaw in his attempt to subtract 41 years from the present age of Mahatma Gandhi.

But death does not respect our "wishful desire." Neither Mr. Shaw nor Mahatma Gandhi, nor any other great personality, had ever been able to solve the problem of death.

The leaders of nations have... opened many factories for manufacturing weapons for the art of killing, but none has opened a factory to manufacture weapons for protecting man from the cruel hands of death, although our wishful desire is always not to die.

Men were preoccupied with the problem of how to get bread, although this problem was actually solved by nature. Man should try to solve the problem of death.

Bhagavad-gītā tells that the problem of death can be solved. Although death is everywhere in the material world, "One who attains to Me," says Kṛṣṇa, "never has to take his birth again in the material world." There is a spiritual world, nondestructible, and one who goes there does not come back to the region of death. Why should the leaders of nations cling to the planet of their birth, where death is inevitable? Abhay concluded, "We wish that in their ripe old age Mr. Shaw and Mahatma Gandhi will make combined effort to educate men to learn how to go back to home, back to Godhead."

After two issues of Back to Godhead, Abhay had to stop. Printing was costly. But he kept writing regularly, working at Geetopanishad, turning out new articles and philosophical purports on the scriptures—even in the same book in which he wrote his pharmaceutical formulas.

* * *

One night, Abhay had an unusual dream. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta appeared before him, beckoning. He was asking Abhay to leave home and take sannyāsa. Abhay awoke in an intensely emotional state. "How horrible!" he thought. He knew it was not an ordinary dream, yet the request seemed so difficult and unlikely. Take sannyāsa! At least it was not something he could do immediately. Now he had to improve the business, and with the profits he would print books. He went on with his duties, but remained shaken by the dream.

* * *

In 1945, the war over and India still in turmoil under British rule, Abhay saw a good opportunity to make his business more successful. In Lucknow, six hundred miles from Calcutta, he rented a building and opened his own factory, Abhay Charan De and Sons.

It was a major investment, requiring forty thousand rupees to start, and he began on a larger scale than ever before. Also, according to law, to insure that he was not dealing in the black market or misusing chemicals, he had to employ three government inspectors. Yet despite a high overhead he established a good market, and his products were in demand. He closed his small operation in Calcutta and concentrated on the Lucknow business.

Although the building was known locally to be haunted by ghosts, Abhay had not been deterred. But when he began his operations, some of the workers came to him frightened: "Bābū, Bābū, there is a ghost!" Abhay then went through the entire building chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and after that there were no more complaints of ghosts.

On November 13, Abhay wrote to his servant Gouranga, mentioning some of his difficulties in Lucknow and asking him to come there to help. In this letter, Abhay spoke bitterly of his wife, Radharani, and children.

Gouranga Prabhu,

Please accept my obeisances. I received your letter dated 7th. Due to lack of time I could not reply in time. I stay here alone with some servants. If I leave now, then I have to close everything down. Due to my leaving once and closing the business, I have lost about 10,000 rupees and the good will has also been affected and my enemies have increased. That is why I am fighting, practically staking my whole life. I am staying here all alone in the middle of so many difficulties not for nothing. That's why I was writing to you repeatedly to come here. As soon as you receive this letter show it to Dubra. Take at least ten rupees from him and come here. When you come here, I will make arrangements to send money to your home. What's the point in holding you back with an excuse that there is no servant or maidservant? I tried to serve them enough by keeping servants, maidservants and cooks. But up until today they have not become attached to devotional service. So I am no more interested about those affairs. When you come here, then I will go to Calcutta. If I see

that they are interested about devotional service, then only will I maintain my establishment there. Otherwise, I will not maintain them any more. Bring a quilt for me.

Yours,

Abhay

The two interests—family and preaching—were conflicting. Radharani had never shown any interest in Back to Godhead. She seemed to work against his enthusiasm, both for publishing and for earning. The business was called Abhay Charan De and Sons, and yet the sons were disinclined to help. And when he had called for his servant to join him in Lucknow, the family had objected, saying they needed Gouranga more there.

What was the use? The family was interested neither in backing him in his business nor in taking up the life of devotional service. And since his business was primarily an outcome of his family life, he resented that he had to give it so much of his energy. It was the old economic law by Marshall that he had learned in college: Without family affection, a man's economic impetus is weakened.

Of course, there could be a compatible balance between family service and devotional service. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had described two simultaneous obligations: bodily and spiritual. Social status, mental development, cleanliness, nourishment, and the struggle for existence were all bodily obligations; the activities of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa were spiritual. And the two should parallel one another. In Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's life, his family was a source of spiritual encouragement, and he used his social position to advance his preaching.

But Abhay's experience had been different; the two paths seemed to be at war, each threatening the other's existence. He felt himself operating somewhat like the materialists he had criticized in his writings, absorbed in the struggle for existence with insufficient time for self-realization. Although his family made more and more demands of him, he was feeling less inclined to work for them and more inclined to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It was a predicament. He could only push on diligently, support his family, expand his business, and hope for a great success so that he could revive his publishing.

But the Lucknow factory seemed almost beyond his means. He had purposely begun on a large scale with the aim of making a larger profit. But monthly expenses were high, he had fallen behind in his rent, and now he was involved in a court case with the landlord. Although he was visiting Calcutta regularly and shipping raw materials from Calcutta to Lucknow daily, he always found his family members in Calcutta uncooperative. His servant Gouranga was also reluctant to work as Abhay required and was thinking of going back to live with his family. Abhay again wrote to Gouranga on the twenty-third.

Offering my humble obeisances at the feet of the Vaishnava. Gouranga Prabhu, I have received your postcard dated 18/11/45 and got all the informations. There is no need to come here just for a month after spending the money and then go back. For the present take 25 rupees from Dubra and go home. Write a letter to me after your arrival, then I will send the rest of your money in one or two installments by money order. Then from there you let me know when can you come here.

I have started my work here in a fairly big scale. You have seen that with your own eyes... So if there is no income, who will spend [for a court] interrogation? Everything is on my head. The brother and sons are just eating and sleeping like a bunch of females and breaking the axe on my head.

You go home as soon as you get the money and try to come back as soon as possible.

Yours,

Sri Abhay Charan De

SPL 6: An Unknown Friend

CHAPTER SIX

An Unknown Friend

Let the sharp moralists accuse me of being illusioned; I do not mind. Experts in Vedic activities may slander me as being misled, friends and relatives may call me frustrated, my brothers may call me a fool, the wealthy mammonites may point me out as mad, and the learned philosophers may assert that I am much too proud. Still, my mind does not budge an inch from the determination to serve the lotus feet of Govinda, though I am unable to do it

—Mādhavendra Purī

Aside from his difficulties with business and family, Abhay had to survive the cataclysms of Indian independence and partition. He was not active politically, but was one of hundreds of millions affected by the violent dawn of Indian independence.

While Gandhi and the Hindu-dominated Congress were demanding a united free India, the Muslim League, led by M. A. Jinnah, called for partition and their own Muslim nation—Pakistan. The conflict raged. In August 1946 the outgoing British government invited Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress Party president, to form an interim national government; but the League objected—the Muslim cause would be denied. Jinnah had already declared August 16 “Direct Action Day,” which amounted to little in most parts of India but in Calcutta erupted in Hindu-Muslim rioting. In five days of violence, four thousand died, and thousands more were wounded. In the months that followed, Hindu-Muslim rioting repeatedly flared up throughout India.

Early in 1947, when the new viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, met with Indian political leaders to plan transfer of power, riots again broke out as Muslims demanded Pakistan. At the threat of civil war, Congress finally agreed on partition, and on July 18, the Indian independence bill passed without dissent. One month later India and Pakistan emerged as independent nations, with Jawaharlal Nehru as India's first prime minister.

Partition tore India, leaving five million Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan and as many Muslims in India. And the great migration began. Refugees fleeing from Pakistan to India and from India to Pakistan clashed with each other and even with their own countrymen of the opposing faith, and the violence that erupted claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Our independence movement was started by Mahatma Gandhiji for uniting all the different sections of the people. But actually the result was that instead of being united, India was partitioned. And the partition became so poisonous that formerly there was only sporadic Hindu-Muslim riots in some places, but now there was organized fighting between Pakistan and Hindustan. So actually we were not being united, we were being separated.

The Hindus would go to the mosque of the Muslim and break it, and the Muslim would go to the temples of the Hindus and break the idol. And they will think, "We have finished the Hindus' God." Just like the Hindus also think "Oh, we have broken their God." They are all ignorant. God cannot be Hindu. God cannot be Muslim. God cannot be Christian. God is God.

We have seen in 1947—Hindu-Muslim fighting. One party was Hindu, the other party was Muslim. They fought, and so many died, and after death there was no distinction who was Hindu or who was Muslim—the municipal men gathered them together in piles to throw them somewhere. They fought, and in Baghbazar there were heaps of dead bodies. And when it is a dead body, nobody could understand who was Hindu and who was Muslim. Simply it was to be cleared from the road.

Abhay was not expecting Indian independence to bring any real solutions. Unless the leaders were God conscious, what change would there be? Now he saw that instead of suffering at the hand of a foreign rule, the people were free to suffer under their own countrymen. In fact, the fighting and suffering had increased.

Throughout the years of India's political struggles, Abhay had never lost his desire to propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He had seen how promises of unity and independence had brought mostly higher prices and civic mismanagement. He had seen neighborhoods where Indians had lived peacefully for generations erupt in hatred and rioting, in the wake of British and Indian diplomatic manipulations. It was as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had described it:

Persons who are strongly entrapped by the consciousness of enjoying material life, and who have therefore accepted as their leader or guru a similar blind man attached to external sense objects, cannot understand that the goal of life is to return home, back to Godhead, and engage in the service of Lord Vishnu. As blind men guided by another blind man miss the right path and fall into a ditch, materially attached men led by another materially attached man are bound by the ropes of fruitive labour, which are made of very strong cords, and they continue again and again in materialistic life, suffering the threefold miseries.

The Vaiṣṇava prays to his spiritual master, "who has opened my eyes with the torchlight of transcendental knowledge," and he feels obliged to help humanity by bearing the same torch. As a representative of the eternal Vaiṣṇava paramparā, Abhay wanted to shed the light of transcendental knowledge onto the field of current crises. That had been the purpose of Back to Godhead, although since 1944 he had been unable to print the magazine.

But even without the means to publish, Abhay continued writing. His most ambitious project was Geetopanishad, his translation and commentary of Bhagavad-gītā. Gandhi and others often spoke of the wisdom of Bhagavad-gītā—Indians never forgot their Gītā—but most proponents did not teach it as Kṛṣṇa had taught it. They would not recognize Lord Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of their Gītā, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but would extract His words as slogans to bolster their own philosophies. Whether political leaders, religious leaders, or scholars, they almost invariably made their own symbolic and allegorical interpretations. Abhay wanted to present Bhagavad-gītā as is. It was to be twelve-hundred pages—three illustrated, beautifully bound volumes. For Abhay the books were already a reality, from which he was separated only by time. Over the past two years he had accumulated hundreds of manuscript pages. He wrote in notebooks and on loose papers and then typed the numbered manuscript pages. He could never give the book his full time, but gradually it began to take shape.

He also preached Lord Caitanya's message through letters, writing to many leaders in the government, to respectable acquaintances, and to people whose articles he had read or whose activities had caught his eye in the newspaper. Presenting himself as a humble servant, he wrote to them of his ideas on how India's original Kṛṣṇa conscious culture could be applied as the successful solution to all manners of dilemmas. Sometimes his letters drew replies, and Abhay would respond, fanning the sparks of interest wherever he found them.

A well-known reformer, Mahendra Pratap Raja, was forming what he called the World Federation. Abhay had read a news sheet, which Mr. Pratap had published from Vṛndāvana, in which he addressed all nations and peoples of the world and called for a unity of mankind.

Abhay wrote to him suggesting that Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings in Bhagavad-gītā provided a theistic science capable of uniting all religions. Mr. Pratap replied, in May 1947, "I admire your deep study of Shreemad Bhagwat Geeta. I myself am a great admirer of the great classic. I assure you that I am working strictly according to the book." Mr. Pratap mentioned his book, Religion of Love, and suggested that Abhay read it if he wanted to know the World Federation's view of religion. "In the meanwhile," Mr. Pratap wrote, "I do not agree to your suggestion of making the name of 'Krishna' or 'Govinda' as the basis of the Unity of Religions. This would amount to conversion and won't lead to unity of religions. I highly appreciate your efforts in the direction of 'Back to Godhead.'"

Abhay got the book, read it, and in July 1947, while he was visiting Kanpur, wrote a reply. He had traveled to Kanpur not as a spiritual teacher but as a pharmaceutical salesman. Yet a typewriter had been available, and out had come his preaching.

In continuation of my last post card, I beg to inform you that I have finished the reading of your book Religion of Love. In my opinion the whole thesis is based on the philosophy of Pantheism and the approach is made by the services of mankind. Religion of Love is the true religious idea but if the approach is made through the service of mankind only, then the process is made imperfect, partial and unscientific.

The true Religion of Love is perfectly inculcated in the Bhagwat Geeta... Besides you have not quoted any authority for all your statements. So it is more or less dogmatic. If different men put

different dogmatic views about religion and its essentials, who is to be accepted and who is not to be? Therefore the approach shall be and must be authoritative, scientific and universal.

Abhay then gave a summary of the Bhagavad-gītā in ten points, concluding, "The highest service that can be rendered to Mankind is, therefore, to preach the philosophy and religion of Bhagwat Geeta for all time, all places and all people."

But extended philosophical dialogue was not usually the result of his letters. In 1947, when Abhay wrote to high government officers of the newly formed government of India suggesting a remedy for riots, they turned him away. When he asked to talk with the governor of West Bengal, the governor's secretary replied, "His Excellency regrets that he is unable to grant you an interview at present, owing to heavy pressure of work." When he wrote to the assistant secretary to the minister of education, an assistant to the assistant secretary replied, "The Government of India regret that they are unable to accede to your request."

Sometimes official interest took the form of a patronizing pat on the head: "I am sure your scheme for establishing peace will meet with response from our Prime Minister." And another: "He [the minister of education] is glad to see you are taking to route out communalism. He suggests that you get in touch with..."

A local official asked not to be seen:

I thank you for all that you have written and the fine sentiments which you have expressed. It is no use arguing the matter, as I do not think that I can serve any useful purpose by joining the organization which you wish to set up. And therefore you need not take the trouble of seeing me. I wish you, however, all success.

In October, after the Calcutta riots of 1947, Abhay wrote to the chairman of the rehabilitation committee, who replied:

Regarding hari kirtan and prasadam, you may make any program of your own, but I am afraid I am not interested in the same. Nor my committee, and therefore there is no necessity of your meeting with me.

Abhay was fulfilling his role as a Vaiṣṇava preacher, and the secretaries of the various government offices were recognizing and addressing him as such. But they could not appreciate his applications of the philosophy of Bhagavad-gītā and his suggestions for hari-kīrtana. Occasionally, however, someone seemed interested. Mr. N. P. Asthana, high court advocate, replied:

I am very much obliged to you for your letter re: your broad scheme about spiritual improvement. I thoroughly appreciate the fine feelings which have prompted you to write this letter and the kindness with which you have considered my query. I have been a student of Bhagwat Geeta and have also imbibed some of its teachings, but I still lack a good deal and will be glad to be guided by a person of your accomplishment. You may kindly, therefore, send your scheme to me, on receipt of which I will be able to express my views.

* * *

It was inevitable that Abhay would think of engaging Mahatma Gandhi in devotional service. Because of his lifetime of courageous, ascetic, and moral activities on behalf of his countrymen, Mahatma Gandhi had great power to influence the Indian masses. As with Mahendra Pratap of the World Federation, Mahatma Gandhi's idea of serving God was to try to bring happiness to man through politics and through his own invented methods. As one Englishman had said of Mahatma Gandhi, "He is either a saint amongst the politicians or a politician amongst the saints." But be that as it may, he was not as yet fully engaged in pure devotional service, and his activities were not those of a mahātmā as described in Bhagavad-gītā. The Gītā defines a mahātmā as one who fully engages in worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, always chanting His glories. The mahātmā encourages others to surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

But because as a young man Abhay had been a follower of Gandhi's, Abhay had a special feeling for him. Of course, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had later convinced him to engage exclusively in devotional service. But now Abhay felt his old friendship for Gandhi, even though Gandhi was a towering figure of worldwide fame and Abhay unknown both to Gandhi and to the world.

On December 7, 1947, Abhay wrote to Gandhi from Kanpur. Gandhi was living at the Birla Mansion in Delhi, where large military forces throughout the city discouraged Hindu-Muslim rioting. Gandhi's secretary, Pyarelal Nayar, described Gandhi at this time as "the saddest man one could picture." The men he had led in the struggle for Indian independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and others, had taken the leadership of the nation. And Gandhi, with his doctrines of nonviolence, unity, and agrarianism, was now at odds with them in many ways. He feared he was becoming an anachronism. His former colleagues admired him but rejected his leadership. All his programs—Hindu-Muslim unity, nonviolence, upliftment for the poor—although praised throughout the world, were failures in the India of 1947. On a recent visit to a Muslim refugee camp, a crowd of Muslims who surrounded his car had cursed him, and at a public prayer meeting a Hindu crowd had shouted him down and ended his meeting when he had attempted to read from the Koran. At seventy-eight years, Gandhi was physically weak and melancholy.

In all likelihood, Abhay's letter would never reach him. Abhay knew it. Sending a letter to Gandhi would be like putting a note in a bottle and sending it to sea. It would arrive in the flood of mail, and Gandhi would be too busy to see it. But Abhay sent it nonetheless.

Dear Friend Mahatmajee,

Please accept my respectful Namaskar. I am your unknown friend but I had to write to you at times and again although you never cared to reply them. I sent you my papers "Back to Godhead" but your secretaries told me that you have very little time to read the letters and much less for reading the magazines. I asked for an interview with you but your busy secretaries never cared to reply this. Anyway, as I am your very old friend although unknown to you, I am writing to you in order to bring you to the rightful position deserved by you. As a sincere friend I must not deviate from my duty towards a friend like your good self.

I tell you as a sincere friend that you must immediately retire from active politics if you do not desire to die an inglorious death. You have 125 years to live as you have desired to live but if you die an inglorious death it is no worth. The honour and prestige that you have obtained during the course of your present lifetime, were not possible to be obtained by anyone else within the living memory. But you must know that all these honours and prestiges were false in as much as they were created by the Illusory Energy of Godhead called the Maya. By this falsity I do not mean to say that your so many friends were false to you nor you were false to them. By this falsity I mean illusion or in other words the false friendship and honours obtained thereby were but creation of Maya and therefore they are always temporary or false as you may call it. But none of you neither your friends nor yourself know this truth.

A sādhu is not supposed to flatter but to cut. This is the basis of his friendship—that he cuts away the illusion of the materialistic person. Mahatma Gandhi, forsaken by his friends, bitterly disappointed at the outcome of the long, hard struggle for Indian independence, and apprehensive about the future, had been reduced to a position in which he might be able to realize that his friends and work were ultimately illusory. Thus it was the perfect time for him to comprehend Abhay's message.

Now by the Grace of God that Illusion is going to be cleared and thus your faithful friends like Acharya Kripalini and others are accusing you for your inability at the present moment to give them any practical programme of work as you happened to give them during your glorious days of non-co-operation movement. So you are also in a plight to find out a proper solution for the present political tangle created by your opponents. You should therefore take a note of warning from your insignificant friend like me, that unless you retire timely from politics and engage yourself cent percent in the preaching work of Bhagwat Geeta, which is the real function of the Mahatmas, you shall have to meet with such inglorious deaths as Mussolini, Hitler,... or Lloyd George met with.

For years Abhay had wanted to approach Mahatma Gandhi with this message. In fact, he had written before, although it had been of no avail. But now he was convinced that unless Gandhi got out of politics he would soon die "an inglorious death." That Gandhi was remaining active in politics rather than preaching devotional service put him in need of a warning. Abhay was writing to save a friend.

You can easily understand as to how some of your political enemies in the garb of friends (both Indian and English) have deliberately cheated you and have broken your heart by doing the same mischief for which you have struggled so hard for so many years. You wanted chiefly Hindu-Moslem unity in India and they have tactfully managed to undo your work, by creation of the Pakistan and India separately. You wanted freedom for India but they have given permanent dependence of India. You wanted to do something for the upliftment of the position of the Bhangis but they are still rotting as Bhangis even though you are living in the Bhangi colony. They are all therefore illusions and when these things will be presented to you as they are, you must consider them as God-sent. God has favoured you by dissipating the illusion you were hovering in and by the same illusion you were nursing those ideas as Truth.

Abhay dutifully attempted to inform Gandhi that there was nothing absolute within this relative world. Ahimsā, or nonviolence, must always be followed by violence, just as light is followed by darkness. Nothing is absolute truth in the dual world. "You did not know this," wrote Abhay, "neither you ever cared to know this from the right sources and therefore all your attempts to create unity were followed by disunity and Ahimsa was followed by Himsa."

Abhay pointed out that Gandhi had never undergone the standard practice for spiritual advancement, namely, accepting a bona fide spiritual master. Although Bhagavad-gītā declares the necessity of accepting a guru in disciplic succession, Gandhi was well known for listening to his inner voice and for extracting ideas from various writers like Ruskin and Thoreau and mixing them with teachings from the New Testament and the Gītā. Had Gandhi approached a guru, said Abhay, he would not have become bewildered within the sphere of relative truth.

In the Katha Upanishad it is ordered that one must approach the bona fide Guru who is not only well versed in all the scriptures of the world but is also the realised soul in Brahman the Absolute—in order to learn the science of Absolute Truth. So also it is instructed in the Bhagwat Geeta as follows:

Tad Biddhi Pranipatena Pariprasnena Sebaya

Upadekshyanti Te Jnanam Jnanina Tatwadarshina

(4/34)

But I know that you never underwent such transcendental teaching except some severe penances which you invented for your purpose as you have invented so many things in the course of experimenting with the relative truths. You might have easily avoided them if you had approached the Guru as above mentioned.

Recognizing Mahatma Gandhi's godly qualities and austerities, Abhay requested him to employ his moral elevation for surrendering to the Absolute Truth. Abhay urged him to get out of politics immediately.

But your sincere efforts to attain some Godly qualities by austerities, etc. surely have raised you to some higher platform which you can better utilise for the purpose of the Absolute Truth. If you, however, remain satisfied with such temporary position only and do not try to know the Absolute Truth, then surely you are to fall down from the artificially exalted position under the laws of Nature. But if you want really to approach the Absolute Truth and want to do some real good to the people in general all over the world, which shall include your ideas of unity, peace and non-violence, then you must give up the rotten politics immediately and rise up for the preaching work of the philosophy and religion of "Bhagwat Geeta" without offering unnecessary and dogmatic interpretation on them. I had occasionally discussed this subject in my paper "Back to Godhead" and a leaf from the same is enclosed herewith for your reference.

I would only request you to retire from politics at least for a month only and let us have discussion on the Bhagwat Geeta. I am sure, thereby, that you shall get a new light from the result of such

discussions not only for your benefit but for the benefit of the world at large—as I know that you are sincere, honest and a moralist.

Awaiting your early reply with interest.

Yours sincerely,

Abhay Charan De

There was no reply. A month later, Gandhi announced that he would fast until death unless India made a payment of 550 million rupees to Pakistan, a previous condition of the partition agreement. At first Hindu refugees from Pakistan demonstrated outside Gandhi's darkened room, chanting, "Let Gandhi die!" But as he fasted, each day closer to death, he aroused the heartfelt concern of the nation, and the government leaders repaid the money to Pakistan. Then, great crowds approached him, chanting, "Let Gandhi live!" Meanwhile, Hindu-Muslim violence continued.

On January 30, the day after he had drafted a new constitution for the Congress Party, Gandhi took his evening meal, worked at his spinning wheel, then walked towards his evening prayer meeting and was shot three times in the chest. He died, crying out the name of God—"He Rāma!" Abhay's letter of the previous month suddenly read like a prophecy. But it had not been read by the person for whom it had been intended.

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When the directors of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial National Fund invited suggestions on how to commemorate Gandhi's life and work, Abhay wrote to them and simultaneously to Vallabhbhai Patel, India's deputy prime minister, proposing "the Gandhian way" to use the funds.

Gandhi's whole life was dedicated to the service of humanity at large with special interest for raising the moral standard. His later activities showed that he was equal to everyone and all the people of the world knew him more as a spiritual leader than a mere politician. Devotion to Godhead was his ultimate aim and when I say that his sacred memory should be perpetrated not in the ordinary way but in the Gandhian way, I mean that fitting respects to his memory will be done in the following manner.

Abhay wrote of a Mahatma Gandhi rarely described: Gandhi as a Vaiṣṇava. Despite his pressing political activities, Gandhi had never missed his daily prayer meetings in the evenings. Even at the time of his assassination, he had been on his way to attend his daily kīrtana. Abhay stressed that it was because of Gandhi's regular participation in congregational prayer that he had been strong in his work to raise the moral standard of humanity. "Gandhiji minus his spiritual activities," Abhay wrote, "is an ordinary politician. But actually he was a saint amongst the statesmen..." Abhay wrote that it had been Lord Caitanya who had originated the congregational chanting of the names of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, and His followers the six Gosvāmīs had left a wealth of literature for discussion and understanding. The Memorial Fund board should take this lesson from Mahatmajī's practical life and develop it on a large scale. Therefore, one fitting memorial to Mahatma Gandhi would be to institute daily congregational readings from the Bhagavad-gītā. When peoples' spiritual instincts

were kindled by daily prayer meetings, then they would develop the highest qualities in their character.

Abhay had a second suggestion. Gandhi was known for his attempts to enable the lower classes to enter the temples, and in Noakhali he had installed the Deity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa for the ordinary man to worship. Although this was generally taken as a side issue of Gandhi's work, Abhay took it as the essence—that Gandhi's was a theistic movement. Abhay explained that although there were hundreds and thousands of temples in India, they were not being properly managed, and therefore educated citizens were neglecting them. In the original Vedic culture, the purpose of the temples had been to nurture spiritual culture. If the temples of India could be reorganized as vital spiritual centers, then the disturbed minds of the day could be trained for life's higher duties. "Such education and practice," Abhay wrote, "can help man in realising the existence of God, without whose sanction, according to Mahatma Gandhi, 'not a blade of grass moves.'"

He also referred to Gandhi's harijan movement, which most people saw as Gandhi's humanitarian effort to grant equal rights to untouchables, whom Gandhi had recognized as harijan, "people of God." Abhay stressed that this was also an essentially spiritual aspect of Gandhi's life. But rather than simply rubber-stamping an untouchable as "harijan," Abhay argued, there must be a systematic program for elevating people of the lower classes. This program was taught in the Bhagavad-gītā and could best be applied under the guidance of a bona fide devotee of the Lord. Abhay volunteered to take up the work on behalf of the Memorial Board. If the board, in attempting to commemorate Gandhi's efforts and accomplishments, neglected the essential spiritual aspects of Gandhi's life, Abhay warned, "his memory will soon be dead, as has been the lot of other politicians."

Perhaps they saw Abhay as another opportunist seeking money or as a sectarian religionist. But Abhay saw himself as a lowly servant of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Seeing certain Vaiṣṇava qualities in the character of Mahatma Gandhi, Abhay took the opportunity to introduce his spiritual master's message to the world. And by so doing, he paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, praising him as a great devotee interested in kīrtana, temple worship, and elevating unfortunates to become people of God.

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While on business in Madurai, in South India, Abhay showed some of his writings to Muthuswamy Chetty, another medical salesman. Mr. Chetty was impressed and felt he could persuade his wealthy friend Dr. Allagappa, the famous "Birla of the South," to finance the printing. In April of 1948, Mr. Chetty wrote to Abhay, saying that he had been prompted to help Abhay "for something God has meant." He asked Abhay Charan to send him the complete Geetopanishad manuscript so that he could present it to Dr. Allagappa in Madras. Mr. Chetty had already written Dr. Allagappa about the "first-class work Geetopanishad, to cover 1,200 pages of royal size" and had urged him to publish it for the benefit of religious-minded people. He had also mentioned that Abhay had been trying to publish the book since 1946.

Dr. Allagappa soon replied to Mr. Chetty that he was interested, and Mr. Chetty wrote to Abhay, "So I am on my way to help you, and only God must help me." As for talking business with Dr.

Allagappa, there would be no need, since “once he does it, it is for the sake of benevolence...” Anticipating success, Mr. Chetty invited Abhay to come to Madras to meet Dr. Allagappa. “There he will arrange for what God has meant for you to do in your religious duty.” In Madras, Abhay would be able to check and correct the proofs of the manuscript and see the book through the various stages of printing. It was a big opportunity, and Abhay was not one to miss an opportunity. If the book could be published, it would be a great victory in his mission to fulfill the request of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

But then the worst thing happened. The manuscript was stolen. It was the only copy, the one Abhay was keeping safely at home. He questioned his family and servants—no one knew what had happened. Abhay was baffled; so much work had been undone. He felt he had worked so many months for nothing. Although he couldn't prove anything, he suspected that his servant or even his son might have done it, with a motive for raising money. But it remained a mystery.

* * *

During 1949, Abhay wrote articles in Bengali and submitted them to his Godbrother B. P. Keśava Mahārāja, who published them in his Gaudīya Patrikā. Abhay's format for addressing world problems was the same as his spiritual master's. Even at their first meeting, in 1922, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had countered Abhay's nationalistic arguments by stressing that the real crisis in the world was neither social nor political nor anything material, but was simply the dearth of transcendental knowledge. Abhay simply elaborated on this theme. He never advocated that the ordinary concerns of the world be disregarded, but he stressed that crises can be solved only when the leadership is God conscious. If Kṛṣṇa consciousness were put first, other concerns could be brought into line. But without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so-called solutions were only folly.

Abhay began his first Bengali article by quoting an editorial from the Allahabad edition of the Calcutta newspaper Amrita Bazar. The editor had sorely lamented that India's worst troubles had not yet ended, despite national independence.

The national week has begun. The memories of Jallianwalla Bagh and political serfdom no longer trouble us. But our trouble is far from being at an end. In the dispensation of Providence, mankind cannot have any rest. If one kind of trouble goes, another quickly follows. India, politically free, is faced with difficulties no less serious than those that troubled us under a foreign rule.

Abhay seized on this editorial reflection as proof of the basic defect of all worldly plans for amelioration. He pointed out that although India had been subjugated by foreign rulers since the time of Muhammad Ghorī (A.D. 1050), India prior to that had never been subjugated. In those days, India had been a God conscious nation. It was when India's leaders had abandoned their spiritual heritage that India had fallen.

Thus, Indians should see that they were now being punished by the stringent laws of material nature. “The honorable editor of Amrita Bazar Patrika,” Abhay noted, “has written so sadly, ‘If one trouble goes, another quickly follows,’ but that was stated in the Bhagwat Geeta a long time previously.” It was the same theme he had stated in his 1944 Back to Godhead articles and the theme of so many of his letters also: Man, due to his neglect of the Supreme Lord, is being

punished by material nature, which is directly controlled by the Supreme Lord. Men may write newspaper articles, pass measures at meetings and conferences, and attempt to overcome nature by scientific research, yet they will remain unable to surmount nature's law. As they try to escape their punishments, the Supreme Lord will cast them deeper into illusion, and they will fail miserably. Abhay quoted an appropriate Bengali saying: "I was trying to make a statue of Shiva, but I ended up making a monkey."

In order to rid the world of misery and bring about happiness, we have now created the atomic bomb. Seeing the all-pervading destruction which could take place in the near future by atomic reactions, Western thinkers have become greatly disturbed. Some people try to give consolation, saying that we will only use this atomic energy to bring about happiness in the world. This is also another enigma of the illusory potency.

The problem, Abhay explained, was that the world was lacking Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. Leaders under the influence of material nature could never solve the problems of the world. Materialistic illusion was especially prevalent in the Western countries, which Indians should not try to imitate. Abhay prophesied, however, that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would one day reach the West.

In the Western countries there has never been any discussion of the relation between the atomic individual soul and the Supreme complete conscious Personality of Godhead. Neither their activities nor their state in ultimate perfection has been investigated. That is why, even though they have made so much material advancement, they are squirming in the burning poison of sensualism... We can be absolutely certain that India's real peace formula will one day reach their ears.

Abhay's articles began appearing regularly in the Gaudīya Patrikā. His Godbrothers appreciated his writings; his denunciation of the materialistic mentality was reminiscent of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's. In Abhay's hands, the Bhagavad-gītā's concept of the asura (demon) was no longer merely a depiction of a mythological or legendary enemy; the asuras had come to life in the modern-day Hitler, Churchill, or even an Indian prime minister. But, as Abhay pointed out, his denunciation of the misleaders was not his own; he was only repeating the words of Kṛṣṇa.

* * *

During 1950-51 he continued his letter-writing, attempting to gain a hearing with various organizations and leaders. He wrote the World Pacifist Committee, the president of India, and the minister of education. He wrote to the Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom, which wrote back suggesting that Abhay had written them by mistake. He wrote to an official of the All-Religions Conference in Bombay, advising that because of their approach nothing practical would come out of their conference; "The practical solution is lying in the transcendental message of Sree Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, as given by Him in the Bhagwat Geeta."

On September 14, 1951, he corresponded with Daniel Bailey of the American Reporter, a magazine published by the American embassy in New Delhi. Abhay pointed out that the philosophy of understanding the Absolute Truth, as realized by the sages of India, was higher than attempts to combine East and West. Mr. Bailey replied that he was aware of Eastern philosophical and religious

influence in the West and cited the progress of a yoga mission in New York City, which he said had some influence on the Protestants in America. But when Abhay asked if one of his articles could appear in the American Reporter, Mr. Bailey replied, "If we were to give considerable space in the American Reporter to, say, the Gītā, we in all fairness would have to give equal space to the other philosophies and our desire is not to endorse or condemn any of them, but simply to assist in a better understanding..." In a further reply, Abhay differed with Mr. Bailey's contention that people should be encouraged to make their own interpretation of religion: "Less intelligent men are always guided by those who are superior in knowledge in all spheres of life."

Abhay even wrote to the Ford Foundation in Detroit, and a staff assistant wrote back, "Regret to advise you that we are unable to pursue your suggestions concerning the establishment of an association of the intelligent class of people. The Ford Foundation has no program in which specific ideas such as you describe might be included."

Although most of his suggestions were rejected, occasionally he received words of appreciation. A certain Doctor Muhammad Sayyid, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Allahabad, wrote, "You seem to have assimilated the universal teaching of ancient India, which is... really laudable." And the governor of Uttar Pradesh replied, "You are doing noble work, for nothing is nobler than to be God minded."

Not only was Abhay giving advice in his letters, but he was hinting that he could also give practical help. If he could obtain institutional backing, he was prepared to do many things: teach classes, manage temples, teach temple worship, and initiate devotees, as well as organize various kinds of field work to propagate the principles of Bhagavad-gītā. Usually he did not spell out exactly how things should be done, but he pointed to the philosophical defects in the present methods and the superiority of working in accord with the Vedic literature. By the grace of his spiritual master, he knew the science of applying Bhagavad-gītā to almost any situation; if someone would only show interest, he could teach that person the superiority of working according to Bhagavad-gītā.

After attending a meeting in which a prominent industrialist had stressed harmonious relationships between labor and management in his factory, Abhay wrote a long letter, suggesting the man consider the good effects the congregational chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa could produce. Since the factory had a special employees' club and lounge, Abhay suggested that the workers assemble there and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Abhay urged everyone to surrender to Kṛṣṇa, but most people had their own philosophies and took his spirit to be sectarian or proselytizing. But Bhagavad-gītā was universal, Abhay wrote, and God could not be omitted from any program, even in the name of a secular state. Kṛṣṇa, as the father of all living beings, had jurisdiction over all programs, organizations, and governments. Indians especially should appreciate the universal scope of Bhagavad-gītā.

Although Abhay always had a plan of action behind his suggestions, he first sought the interest of his correspondent. There wasn't much interest, and he was repeatedly turned down, but he never felt discouraged; he always anticipated finding a sympathizer. He kept copies of all his letters and their replies, a word of appreciation or a slight show of interest from a correspondent being sufficient to elicit from Abhay another thoughtful reply.

He had developed a keen sense of dedication to Lord Caitanya's mission, without expecting leadership from the Gaudiya Math. He still cherished the idea that his Godbrothers would soon come together and preach, but he didn't put any energy in the maṭhas, since to do so would mean to become involved in one of the factions. Staying clear of the Gaudiya Math's internal fray, Abhay continued his letter-writing campaign alone, introducing himself as a preacher of Bhagavad-gītā and editor of Back to Godhead magazine.

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In 1948, Abhay closed his Lucknow factory. He had fallen behind in employees' salaries, and since 1946 he had been paying past rent in installments. But when sales dropped off, continuing the factory became impossible. He lost everything.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I started a big laboratory in Lucknow. Those were golden days. My business flourished like anything. Everyone in the chemical business knew. But then, gradually, everything dwindled.

With the help of some acquaintances in Allahabad, he opened a small factory there, in the same city where his Prayag Pharmacy had failed fifteen years before. He moved to Allahabad with his son Brindaban and continued manufacturing medicines. While the rest of the family remained at Banerjee Lane in Calcutta, Abhay continued his traveling; but now he was often away for months at a time.

And then he had the dream a second time. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared before him; again he was beckoning, indicating that Abhay should take sannyāsa. And again Abhay had to put the dream aside. He was a householder with many responsibilities. To take sannyāsa would mean to give up everything. He had to earn money. He now had five children. "Why is Guru Mahārāja asking me to take sannyāsa?" he thought. It was not possible now.

The Allahabad business was unsuccessful. "At present, the condition of our business is not very good," he wrote his servant Gouranga, who had asked to rejoin him. "When the condition gets better and if you are free at that time I will call for you." He worked earnestly, but results were meager.

As with everything else, Abhay saw his present circumstances through the eyes of scripture. And he could not help but think of the verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

yasyāham anuṅṛhṇāmi

hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ

tato 'dhanam tyajanty asya

sva-janā duḥkha-duḥkhitam

"When I feel especially merciful towards someone, I gradually take away all his material possessions. His friends and relatives then reject this poverty-stricken and most wretched fellow."

He had heard Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī quote the verse, and now he thought of it often. He took it that his present circumstances were controlled by Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was forcing him into a helpless position, freeing him for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Somehow or other, my intention for preaching the message of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu increased, and the other side decreased. I was not disinclined, but Kṛṣṇa forced me: "You must give it up." The history is known—how it decreased, decreased, decreased.

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Queen Kuntī had also prayed, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, Your Lordship can easily be approached, but only by those who are materially exhausted. One who is on the path of [material] progress, trying to improve himself with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education, and bodily beauty, cannot approach You with sincere feeling."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So in 1950 I retired, practically. Not retired, but a little in touch with business—whatever is going on. Then almost it became nil. Whatever was there, all right. You do whatever you like.

Abhay's wife independently moved along with her sons back to her father's house at 72 Mahatma Gandhi Road. She had reasoned that her financial support was becoming precarious.

Abhay was spending most of his time away from home. He was gradually disassociating himself from the family. When after several months he would meet his wife and children, his father-in-law would criticize him: "You are always going outside. You are always worshiping God. You are not looking after my family." Whenever he could, Abhay would send his family some money.

Mr. Sudhir Kumar Dutta (Abhay's nephew): I sometimes noticed how he was thinking so many things—about his family, about his writings, about making bigger and bigger in business. "What to do, what to do?" He was thinking seriously to earn more money from his business. But that means he has to give more time for his business. And his writing he'd never give up. He was writing more and more, and people sometimes abused him: "Hey, you are writing religious things. You are only thinking of God? Then who will maintain your family? What will you do for the family?" Sometimes he argued with them: "What has this family given me? Why should I forget about God? This is the real thing, what I am doing. You cannot realize what I am doing."

On a visit to Calcutta, Abhay stayed at the home of his father-in-law, where he was given his own room. When his wife served him dinner, he noticed that everything had been purchased from the market. "How is this?" he asked.

"The cook is sick today," Radharani replied.

Abhay thought, "It is better that we not live here at the home of her father, or else she will be spoiled even more." So he moved his family to a new address on Chetla Street. Here he sometimes

stayed with his family for a few months, writing articles and doing a minimal amount of business, but most of the time he stayed in Allahabad.

In Allahabad, Abhay, now fifty-four, lived like a *vānaprastha*, or one who has retired from family life. He was indifferent to the activities of family and business—activities a family man generally considers his prime objects of responsibility and happiness.

In his writings Abhay had several times discussed the four *āśramas*, or spiritual divisions of Vedic society: *brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*. In the first division, the *brahmacārī āśrama*, a young boy's parents send him to the place of the guru, or *gurukula*, where he lives a simple life, studying the Vedic literature under the guidance of his guru. Thus in his childhood and youth he learns the principles of austerity and spiritual knowledge that form the basis for his entire life.

At age twenty-one the *brahmacārī* may take a wife and thus enter the next *āśrama*, the *gṛhastha āśrama*; or, like *Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī*, he may choose to remain a lifelong *brahmacārī*. In his boyhood, Abhay had remained celibate and had imbibed the principles of devotion to Kṛṣṇa from his father and mother. Although he had lived at home, his upbringing had been the equivalent of *brahmacārī* life. And by marriage at the age of twenty-one, he had entered the *gṛhastha āśrama* at the appropriate age. Gour Mohan's example had shown Abhay how to remain a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, even in family life. And as *Vaiṣṇavas*, Abhay and his wife had avoided the excesses of materialistic household life.

At fifty a man is supposed to retire from his family activities, and this stage is called *vānaprastha*. In the *vānaprastha āśrama*, both man and wife agree to abstain from further sexual contact; they may continue living together, but the emphasis is on spiritual partnership. As *vānaprasthas* they may travel together on pilgrimage to the holy places in India, preparing for their inevitable departure from the material world. Thus the Vedic *āśramas*, after allowing one to fulfill material life, enable one to end the cycle of repeated birth and death and attain the eternal spiritual world. A man of fifty should be able to see by his aging body that inevitable death is approaching, and he should have the good sense to prepare.

In the final division, the *sannyāsa āśrama*, the man places his wife in the care of a grown son and fully dedicates himself to serving the Supreme Lord. Formerly the *sannyāsa āśrama* meant a solitary life of penances in the Himalayas. But in the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* line, *Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī* had emphasized preaching.

Although Abhay had not formally defined his status within the four *āśramas*, he appeared to be living more as a *vānaprastha* than a *gṛhastha*. He saw his business failures and his distasteful family situation as Kṛṣṇa's blessings, freeing him from family responsibilities and turning him wholeheartedly towards executing *Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī*'s order to preach.

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In Allahabad, Abhay managed to save enough money to revive the printing of *Back to Godhead*, and in February 1952, from his editorial office (and home) at 57B Canning Road, the first issue in

eight years appeared. As before, he did everything himself—all the writing, typing, editing, meeting with the printer, and finally distributing the copies by hand as well as mailing them to respectable leaders throughout India. This, he felt, was the real purpose of living in Allahabad, or anywhere; this was the best use of money, the purpose of human life: to engage fully in glorifying the Supreme Lord. Other things were temporary and would soon be lost.

When he visited his family in Calcutta, old friends would gather in his room, and he would preach and give classes on Bhagavad-gītā. Abhay invited his wife and family to take part in these discussions, but they would resolutely sit in an upstairs room, often taking tea, as if in defiance of his preaching. Abhay was supporting them, he was still associating with them, but he was bent on preaching, and they were not making it attractive for him to do so within the family. If there were to be family life for Abhay, then his wife and sons would have to recognize and rejoice in the fact that he was becoming a full-fledged preacher. They would have to understand that his life's concern was to serve his spiritual master's mission. They could not simply ignore his transformation. They could not insist that he was simply an ordinary man. Abhay continued to try to draw his wife in, hoping she would gradually follow him in the preacher's life. But she had not the slightest interest in her husband's preaching.

And why should he spend his days worrying about family, chemicals, and money? Let his relatives criticize, but Back to Godhead was the real service he could offer to the whole family of mankind. Mādhavendra Purī, a great spiritual preceptor and predecessor of Lord Caitanya, had written about the devotees' indifference to worldly criticism:

O demigods and forefathers, please excuse me. I am unable to perform any more offerings for your pleasure. Now I have decided to free myself from all reactions to sins simply by remembering anywhere and everywhere the great descendant of Yadu and the great enemy of Kāṁsa [Lord Kṛṣṇa]. I think that this is sufficient for me. So what is the use of further endeavors?

Let the sharp moralists accuse me of being illusioned; I do not mind. Experts in Vedic activities may slander me as being misled, friends and relatives may call me frustrated, my brothers may call me a fool, the wealthy mammonites may point me out as mad, and the learned philosophers may assert that I am much too proud; still my mind does not budge an inch from the determination to serve the lotus feet of Govinda, though I be unable to do it.

Why should he waste time with petty family problems when he held answers to the problems of India and the world? As a knower of Bhagavad-gītā, he felt that his first obligation was to offer solutions to the complex crises of war, hunger, immorality, crime—all symptoms of godlessness. And if dedicating himself to such work meant that other, lesser responsibilities suffered, then there was no loss.

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In March 1952, Abhay published another issue of Back to Godhead. It was dedicated mostly to a biographical article Abhay had written about Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and his father, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

He [Bhaktivinode Thakur] vehemently protested against the principles of those pseudo-transcendentalists now passed in the name of Lord Chaitanya. He initiated the reformatory movement by literary contributions while he still engaged as a high Government Officer. During his householder life and serving as a Magistrate, he wrote books of various descriptions in Bengali, English, Sanskrit & etc. to present an actual picture of pure devotional activities to Lord Chaitanya. Sreela Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj got inspiration from his very Childhood all about Sreela Thakur Bhaktivinode's movement. [He] worked as the private secretary of Sreela Bhaktivinode Thakur and as such Bhaktivinode Thakur gave Him (Sreela Saraswati Thakur) the transcendental Power of Attorney to espouse the cause of Lord Chaitanya. And so after Sreela Bhaktivinode Thakur's departure, Sreela Saraswati Thakur took up reins of that reformatory movement.

Absorbed in producing his monthly journal, Abhay went about his other activities only superficially. Sometimes he traveled on business or, taking the night train from Allahabad to Calcutta, visited his family. When his compartment was not crowded, he would turn on a light while others slept. Riding a night train provided a good opportunity to think or even write. Sometimes he would sleep for a few hours and then sit up again and look out the window to see only night and the reflected lights of the train compartment shining back at him, the windows reflecting his face.

Halfway through the twelve-hour journey, the sky would lighten, turning from gray to light blue, and the first white clouds would appear in the sky. He could see lights in the towns and hear the train horn warning. When the train slowed and stopped at a station, tea vendors would walk alongside the train windows yelling, "Chāy! Chāy! Chāy!" their loud singsong din filling the ears with "Chāy!" and chāy filling the air with its aroma, as hundreds of passengers sipped their morning tea.

During his more than twenty years of extensive train travel, Abhay had noticed more and more people smoking cigarettes and more and more women traveling alone. India was becoming Westernized. And the national leaders were paving the way—the blind leading the blind. They wanted the kingdom of God without God. They wanted a progressive, industrialized India, without Kṛṣṇa. From the windows he could see large fields being left uncultivated, and yet people were hungry.

Abhay would sometimes read a newspaper and cut out an article that seemed to warrant a reply in Back to Godhead or that sparked an idea for an essay. He would deliberate over how to approach people for assistance, whom to approach, and how to start a society of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. People not only in India but all over the world could take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Caitanya-bhāgavata had predicted that the name of Lord Caitanya would one day be known in every town and village. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had wanted that. He had sent preachers to England, but they had only gained a protocol visit with the royalty, stood in line, bowed before the Crown, and then come back to India without effecting any change in the Western people. Abhay thought about sending Back to Godhead abroad. His agents, Thacker, Spink and Company, had contacts in America and Europe. People read English all over the world, and some of them would surely appreciate the ideas from Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. This was what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had

wanted. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not for India alone. It was India's greatest gift, and it was for everyone.

SPL 7: Jhansi: The League of Devotees

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jhansi:

The League of Devotees

“Wanted—candidates from any nationality to qualify themselves as real Brahmins for preaching the teachings of Bhagwat Geeta for all practical purposes throughout the whole world. Deserving candidates will be provided with free boarding and lodging. Apply: A. C. Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary of the League of Devotees, Bharati Bhawan, P.O. Jhansi (U.P.)”

—Abhay Charan De

It was another twelve-hour ride with dozens of stops. The train's rattling and clattering and its rocking from side to side made writing difficult, but Abhay, crowded on the wooden bench with other third-class passengers, kept writing. Within the dingy compartment, passengers eyed one another complacently, and soot and dust blew in the open windows as the train sped along. Outside, past the monotonous embankment of loose stones, bright violet trumpet flowers bloomed on tall stalks in the shallow trackside ditches. Water buffalo and oxen grazed in the distance or sometimes pulled a plow before a solitary farmer.

Abhay was going to Jhansi—not for business, but for preaching. One month before, in October of 1952, when Abhay had visited Jhansi on business, Mr. Dubey, a customer and the owner of a Jhansi hospital, had invited him to lecture at the Gītā Mandir. Many Jhansi people appreciated things religious or humanitarian, whether from Vaiṣṇavas, theosophists, Māyāvādīs, politicians, or whatever. They regarded almost any path as “dharma” as long as it showed some edifying piety or tended towards the public welfare. Mr. Dubey had read with interest several issues of *Back to Godhead* and had therefore requested Abhay to speak. Abhay had been eager. And he had found keen interest amongst the audience of more than a hundred people, many of them young medical students and graduates from the local Ayurvedic college.

Abhay was fifty-six, and his commanding presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness had impressed the young, religious-minded people of Jhansi. Twenty-five-year-old Prabhakar Misra, principal of the Vedanta Sanskrit College and head medical officer of the Jhansi Ayurvedic University, saw that Abhay was very forceful in his desire to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Dr. Misra regarded him as a kind of guru, although dressed in white. “Here is a humble person,” he thought, “a real sādhu.”

Short and stocky Dr. Sastri, just beginning his career in Ayurvedic medicine, was an active young man, fascinated by Abhay's purity and his vision of a world movement for distributing India's culture. Older men, like tall, suave Ramcharan Hayharan Mitra, a utensils shopkeeper who wrote poetry and wore a white Nehru cap, also wanted to learn more about Lord Caitanya from Abhay.

Dr. Mullik, who was the Gītā Mandir secretary, and Dr. Siddhi from the university, along with their wives, had sincerely approached Abhay after his talk and asked him please to visit Jhansi again.

Abhay had come to them not as a pharmaceutical salesman or as a man with family concerns, but purely as a devotee of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Although the specific applications of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as given by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī were new to his audience, these teachings had interested them, and the more Abhay had expressed these teachings and spoken of his ambitions for spreading Kṛṣṇa's message, the more his hearers had encouraged him. Several of them had suggested he conduct his mission in Jhansi, and they had promised to help him. Dr. Sastri had even invited Abhay to come live with him; he would introduce Abhay to important citizens and arrange for lectures in the various meeting places of Jhansi.

After staying for ten days, Abhay had returned to Allahabad, but remembering Jhansi he had been unable to concentrate on his business. Something more important was on his mind: the need for an association of devotees propagating the teachings and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness worldwide. With the Gaudiya Math now broken into permanent schisms—his Godbrothers conducting their own private āśramas in separate locales, apparently impervious to any reconciliations—something would have to be done if the overwhelming atmosphere of godlessness were to be corrected. There must emerge, as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had envisioned, a league of preachers with activities worldwide.

The nations of the world had sought unity through the League of Nations, and recently through the United Nations. The League had failed, and so would the United Nations, unless it recognized the true, spiritual unity and equality of all living beings in terms of their intimate relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Abhay did not expect any good to come of such organizations; though they wanted peace and unity, their attempts were simply another feature of godlessness. No, creating peace and unity was the duty of Vaiṣṇavas.

So Abhay had been thinking that perhaps a likely place to start an organization of devotees would be Jhansi. It wasn't a major city, but at least he had found concerned people. The students had listened and accepted and had said they would help. Abhay had sensed a certain lack of sincerity and depth in their appreciation and a sentimentality that made him doubt their seriousness—but if he could find a few or even one who was serious, then he would have a beginning. He wanted to preach—that was his mission. Besides, he was already getting older; if something were to begin, it should be now. So he would go to Jhansi again, to stay for an indefinite duration. Without much concern for his Allahabad affairs, Abhay left his pharmaceutical business with his son and nephew, informing them that he was going to Jhansi.

As the train pulled into the station, Abhay saw Dr. Sastri waving energetically. They rode together by *ṭāṅgā* to Dr. Sastri's dispensary, and the talkative, effusive doctor promised many preaching opportunities and interviews. Dr. Sastri also spoke of the lore of Jhansi: The site of the present city had formerly been a part of the forest in which Lord Rāmacandra had practiced austerities many thousands of years ago. The Pāṇḍavas had lived here during their exile, and since then many great Vedic sages had had their hermitages in the area. Jhansi had also been the home of an Indian heroine, Lakshmi Bhai, who in the mid-nineteenth century had taken part in starting the Indian independence movement against the British regime. Statues and pictures of Lakshmi Bhai riding a

horse and holding a sword in her upraised hand were displayed throughout the town. But the Jhansi of 1952 was a crowded, poor city with dirt streets and minimal technological amenities.

Dr. Sastri lived alone in a two-story rented building in Jhansi's Sipri Bazaar. On the first floor he had his clinic and upstairs his one-room residence, which he had offered to share with Abhay. The young but influential doctor was a good person to introduce Abhay to receptive citizens of Jhansi, and he was eager to do so. Outgoing and energetic, he moved easily amongst the people of his town. He was respectful towards Abhay, who was twice his age and whom he appreciated as being firmly fixed in the Vaiṣṇava philosophy and way of life. Dr. Sastri saw it as his duty to help Abhay, and he gladly introduced Abhay to others and arranged for lectures.

Abhay and Dr. Sastri would cook and eat together like family members. Abhay revealed his idea for a "League of Devotees," an organization with worldwide scope but based in Jhansi. The citizens of Jhansi, he said, should all take part in helping spread Lord Kṛṣṇa's mission. Lord Caitanya had said that Indians have a special responsibility to distribute God consciousness, both in India and around the world.

Dr. Sastri: In his heart, always it was burning that the whole world was suffering in the materialistic view—everyone is busy in eat, drink, and be merry. So the whole day he was touring and preaching his mission that was prescribed by Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his Guru Mahārāja. He was having iron-will determination and self-confidence about his mission. He was not doubtful at all. He was *ḍḍha-vrata* [staunchly determined]. Actually, he was always preaching: *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam/ kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā*—no other way except Hare Kṛṣṇa nāma. So, always discussing, sometimes the whole night he was discussing with me, and sometimes I was fed up. I was requesting, "Please don't disturb me. Please let me sleep." And he—the old man missionary worker—he was just like a young man. I was a young chap, and he was just like my friend, my elder brother. He was like my guide and teacher—because the preacher is a friend, philosopher, and guide.

He was always trying to create a good atmosphere through Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā. The whole Bhagavad-gītā was his practical life. His mission was not a mission of preaching only, but of practical action. He was also trying to catch me for this mission, and I would try to slip away. I did not think that he would do any miracle for spiritual revolution of the world, although that is what he urged us.

While Dr. Sastri tended his clinic, Abhay sat and spoke with patients, occasionally recommending medicines but mostly preaching. For now he was content to live and preach in Jhansi. Here was life—people receptive to his preaching, who responded to his urging them to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. His desire and determination to leave everything else behind and preach day and night, depending on Kṛṣṇa for the result, were increasing.

He began regularly lecturing and chanting at various programs in the city, sometimes at several in one day. On Sundays he would lecture at the Sadhana Mandir, another day at the Gītā Mandir, another day at the Theosophical Society, and regularly in people's homes.

Mr. Ram Mitra, the shopkeeper-poet, maintained a Śiva temple near his home, and Abhay began to perform kīrtana and lecture there. Sometimes Mr. Mitra would speak in Hindi on Bhagavad-gītā at the Sadhana Mandir, and Abhay would attend. Sometimes Abhay would visit Mr. Mitra at his utensils shop. The shop was in a crowded Jhansi bazaar and opened onto the busy street. Abhay would sit down like an ordinary customer, amidst stacks of stainless-steel buckets, plates, bowls, and loṭās, and speak to Mr. Mitra and friends about Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Or sometimes he would listen to Mr. Mitra tell about his published book of poetry and his literary reputation.

Mr. Mitra saw that Abhay's ambition was no less than to make the whole city of Jhansi alive with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Abhay quoted Caitanya-caritāmṛta: "One who has received the great fortune of taking birth in India should make his life perfect and then do good for others by spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness." "And," Abhay would add, "the whole world is waiting, Mr. Mitra, for our spiritual revolution." Mr. Mitra would nod, his handsome Nehru-like face forming a smile. But he saw that Abhay wanted people to do more than merely listen to him—he wanted them to do something.

Once Mr. Mitra offered Abhay a copy of his book, showing him the foreword by a famous man, and repeatedly mentioned that the great sādhu Vinoba Bhave had liked the poems very much. When Mr. Mitra learned that Abhay was a regular milk drinker, he began offering Abhay fresh milk daily from his cow, a black cow (and black cows, Mr. Mitra said, gave especially good milk). Abhay invited Mr. Mitra to accompany him on foot to nearby villages along with a kīrtana party for preaching. But Mr. Mitra declined, being unable to get anyone to tend the shop for him.

Another young Ayurvedic doctor was Dr. Siddhi, who immediately expressed interest in Abhay's enthusiastic plans for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Dr. Siddhi: He came several times to my place. I've got a kīrtana room on my roof, and he performed kīrtana there as well as at the Gītā Mandir. We were also going daily to the Theosophical Society. There was an atmosphere, a very pious, sacred, and calm atmosphere, when the kīrtana and preaching and lectures were performed. He used to play harmonium. We accompanied him for meeting people and preaching his mission. The main thing was to perform kīrtana and give a lecture on the Bhagavad-gītā and the life of Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was his Lord, and I also loved Him.

Radhelal Mullik, secretary of the Gītā Mandir and Sadhana Mandir, began meeting often with Abhay.

Radhelal Mullik: I was very much influenced by him. I used to spend three or four hours every morning in his association. He had many, many big scriptures. He was mainly concerned about the books about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He was also writing at that time. The president of the Gītā Mandir and I both volunteered to cook for him.

* * *

It was during a morning walk with Radhelal Mullik that Abhay first spotted the Bharati Bhavan, a picturesque temple complex across from the large Antiya pond. The neighborhood, known as Antiya Tal, was quiet and sparsely populated, but it was near Sipri Road, the main thoroughfare

between downtown Jhansi and Sipri Bazaar. Abhay inquired from Mr. Mullik about the temple, and together they turned from the main road and walked down a sloping footpath that led through the main gates of the compound.

There they found several secluded acres, nestled within a grove of nīm and mango trees. The main structure was the Radha Memorial. It was small like a chapel, but its proportions were stout and bold. Sitting on an octagonal stone base, it rose on eight ornate pillars of red and white chipped marble, to a stone dome on top. Two elephants, bearing the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī, on their upraised trunks, decorated the entrance. Concrete bunting and striped patterns of red, green, and blue added to the decorative yet massive effect. The entrance was marked with the words Rādhā-smarak carved in Hindi script, and above it the English translation: Radha Memorial.

When Abhay saw the Sanskrit inscription across the side of the stone temple—Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—he turned to Radhelal Mullik and said strongly, “The Lord has built this building for my use.” From that moment, Abhay was determined to have the building.

Mr. Mullik explained that the temple had been built in 1939 as a memorial to the wealthy Vaiṣṇava landowner Radha Bhai but at the present was not in use. Dr. Prabhakar Misra, whom Abhay had already met on several occasions, was occupying some of the rooms, but otherwise it was deserted. Mr. Mullik and Abhay sought Dr. Misra in his quarters in the main building, and when Dr. Misra saw Abhay's enthusiasm, he invited Abhay to stay there with him. Dr. Misra confirmed that except for his Sunday-morning Gītā class the facility was sitting idle, and he welcomed Abhay to carry on his writing and preaching there.

Abhay liked the idea. Immediately he began thinking of uses for the buildings, surveying the land with increasing interest. A second, larger building, also with stone pillars and facades, held a hall and five rooms. Abhay made mental plans for each room: in this room, kīrtanas and lectures with large gatherings; in this room, the Deity of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu; in these rooms, resident brahmacārīs and sannyāsīs; guests here; an office there; the printing press here. There was even land for grazing a cow. It was a self-contained unit. Hundreds of people could come here for kīrtana, prasādam, and discourses. Preachers could go out from here distributing Back to Godhead magazines; some could even go abroad with Lord Caitanya's message.

As Abhay and his companions walked through the compound, appreciating it as a suitable place to start an āśrama, his companions encouraged him, saying they were sure that Mr. Reva Sankar Bhayal, the agent who handled all the properties of Radha Bhai's descendants, would have no objection to Abhay's living there. Why couldn't the landlord give him the buildings? Abhay asked. They were simply going to waste. If it were actually to be a memorial to Rādhā, it should be used in Kṛṣṇa's service, since Kṛṣṇa is Rādhā's worshipable Lord.

Abhay was determined, and his friends agreed to help him. First they met with Ram Mitra, who said that he was such a close friend of Mr. Bhayal's that Mr. Bhayal would probably give the place simply at his request. Dr. Sastri said that he also wanted to go to impress upon Mr. Bhayal how much the people of Jhansi wanted Abhay to have this place.

When Reva Sankar Bhayal met with his friend Ram Mitra, also present were Abhay, Dr. Sastri, Radhelal Mullik, Prabhakar Misra, and Suryamukhi Sharma, a young, educated Jhansi woman. They presented the case from several angles, and Mr. Bhayal listened. He agreed that he wasn't using the place at present and this seemed to be a good cause. He agreed to let Abhay use the facilities for his League of Devotees for as long as he liked. And, at Abhay's request, he agreed to become a member of the League. They shook hands. On behalf of the estate, Mr. Bhayal presented the Bharati Bhavan properties in charity to Abhay Charan De and the League of Devotees.

* * *

During December and January, Abhay prepared a League of Devotees charter. He wanted to begin vigorous, extensive preaching, following the example of his spiritual master. Once he began to set his goals to paper, the project immediately began to expand—beyond Jhansi, beyond India. Of course, the League of Devotees was for the young people of Jhansi—they were already expressing great interest—but Abhay's charter described more than merely evening classes and kīrtana. It was a broad scheme, including a description of the four orders of society (brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra) and detailed plans to accommodate a worldwide religious movement. The charter set forth a probationary period for prospective members, it described spiritual initiation, it arranged for economic reciprocation between individual members and the League, it arranged to provide lodgings for preachers, and it defined prohibited activities: “illegitimate connection with women, intoxicating habit, diets [other than] regulated strictly on vegetable kingdom, gambling, [and] unnecessary sporting or recreation enterprises.”

To establish his League with the registrar in Lucknow, Abhay required a “Memorandum of Association” signed by the League members. In this document, which was to list the objectives of the society, Abhay expressed his vision for the continuation of his spiritual master's mission. Like his Godbrothers who had created new maṭhas after the dissolution of the Gaudiya Math, Abhay was forming a new branch of the Gauḍīya sampradāya, to be called the “League of Devotees.” He was not simply claiming proprietorship of a few buildings; he was establishing a Kṛṣṇa conscious society that would expand into a world movement. His intentions were clearly not insular, but were directed towards creating “centres for spiritual development all over the world...” Abhay wrote: “... Lord Chaitanya... revealed the transcendental process of approaching the ABSOLUTE GODHEAD, and in [His] teachings nothing appears to be absurd from the point of human reasoning and nothing against any religion as accepted by the human and civilised world.” In enumerating the League's goals, he included the opening of centers in all parts of the world, thus establishing the League as “an International Organisation for spiritual developments through education, culture as also by recruiting members from all nations, creeds and castes.” The League would publish literature in many languages and print a monthly magazine, Back to Godhead.

Abhay obtained the necessary signatures for his Memorandum of Association. He then took the train to Lucknow and, on February 4, paid the deposit of fifty rupees and filed his application. He returned to Jhansi.

* * *

In his room in the Radha Memorial, Abhay would rise daily at 4:00 A.M. and arouse his young neighbor, Prabhakar Misra. From four to five Abhay would write, at five he would walk in the Antiya Tal area, at five-thirty bathe, and then chant Hare Kṛṣṇa on his beads until seven, when he would hold a class on the Caitanya-caritāmṛta or Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (although Prabhakar Misra was usually the only listener). At eight he would return to his literary work, typing until after ten, when he would begin to prepare a meal. In the afternoon he would often go around Jhansi, meeting people and preaching, looking for anyone willing to take part in the League of Devotees. In the early evening he would write until seven, when he would prepare for the kīrtana and lecture he would hold at one of various places in the city, depending on where he was invited.

Although Abhay had no money for continuing Back to Godhead, a well-established part of his preaching was to write essays, regardless of whether they were to be immediately published or not. He wrote a long essay, some twenty-four thousand words, entitled "Message of Godhead." He also wrote a series of chapters propounding the teachings of Bhagavad-gītā, especially as they applied to world problems, and Science of Devotion, a summary study of Rūpa Gosvāmī's Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu.

* * *

On May 16, 1953, Abhay held a grand-opening celebration for the League of Devotees, with continuous readings, kīrtana, and prasādam distribution from early morning until night. The buildings were decorated with leaves, flowers, and many earthen waterpots. In the evening, when attendance was the greatest, Abhay lectured from the Ninth Chapter of Bhagavad-gītā on "Rājaguhya Yoga." Prabhakar Misra conducted a fire sacrifice, and several brāhmaṇas chanted mantras from Brahma-saṁhitā. Guests received a sixteen-page prospectus containing Abhay's essay on the need for the League and an excerpt from the charter explaining its goals. It was signed, "OM... TAT... SAT, Abhay Charanaravinda Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary."

The opening was a pleasant, auspicious event for the people of Jhansi, and hundreds gathered in the evening for Abhay's lecture. Dr. Sharma, a charter member of the League and editor of the Jhansi daily newspaper, had already publicized the event and was planning a write-up for the following day. The Gauḍīya Patrikā also reported on the opening.

The editor of the local Theosophical Society, Sri Lakshminarayan Rajapali, was also present; although he holds different philosophical opinions from Bhaktivedanta Prabhu, he is very sympathetic with this movement. In the assembly there were many people worth mentioning... The inauguration and establishing of Deities will be done soon. The assembly will request Rajapati Sri K. M. Munshi to perform the inauguration ceremony... Their center has been registered by the Societies Registration Act. Sri Bharati Bhavan is the name of the League's building, in which they have a lecture hall and a temple that resembles a palace. The assembly has many activities at the center, and there are also facilities for members to live there.

Abhay felt confident that the Bharati Bhavan would now be established and recognized as the home of the League of Devotees. He was happy to see that the opening day was not merely his private affair but an event celebrated by the most important citizens of Jhansi.

* * *

His past life was seeming further and further behind him each day. But one day after he had been in Jhansi about six months, a telegram arrived, bringing a startling reminder of his past connections. His business in Allahabad had been burglarized. His servants had stolen all his money and medicine and anything else of value. It had been a loss of seven thousand rupees. Abhay read the news, laughed, and uttered the Bhāgavatam verse

yasyāham anuṅṛhṇāmi

hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ

tato 'dhanam tyajanty asya

sva-janā duḥkha-duḥkhitam

Prabhakar Misra advised Abhay to go back to Allahabad to recover what he could. "No," Abhay said, "this is good for me. I was sad, but now one great attachment has come to an end, and my life is fully surrendered and dedicated to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava."

Abhay's son Brindaban soon arrived in Jhansi, requesting Abhay to come to Calcutta to revive the business, Abhay Charan De and Sons. As they sat together in Abhay's room at the Radha Memorial, Abhay explained that he could not go back. He requested Brindaban to stay and assist him by doing typewriting. But Brindaban returned to Calcutta.

* * *

From his first meeting with Prabhakar, Abhay had urged the younger, educated man to take part in the League of Devotees as a full-time assistant. Although as lecturer and medical officer Prabhakar had many duties at the university, he helped as much as he felt he could; he soon became Abhay's most active assistant. Abhay appointed him secretary to the League and, after several months, initiated him. Thus Abhay became Prabhakar's spiritual master, and Prabhakar became Abhay's first disciple. As a preacher, Abhay was duty-bound to accept disciples, giving them the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and the paramparā instructions as he had received them from his spiritual master. Prabhakar, however, not being a completely surrendered disciple, remained independent, more like an assistant than a disciple. As university principal, Sanskrit scholar, and medical doctor, he continued to pursue his own interests also.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That League of Devotees—I was alone. There were some students, but they were not so active. I was doing everything. I wanted to organize with Prabhakar Misra and others, but they were not interested to devote their whole time. If you asked him to do full-time work, that he'd not do. But he was initiated. They were all learned scholars in Sanskrit—medical men.

Thus when the Gauḍīya Patrikā had reported the opening-day ceremonies, it had referred to Prabhakar in honorable terms, as Abhay's partner in the League of Devotees, although he was actually Śrīla Bhaktivedanta's initiated disciple.

Bhaktivedanta Prabhu summoned the service of the Honourable Acarya Śrīmad Prabhakar Misra Sastri, kavya- (poetry), vyakarana- (grammar), vedanta- (philosophy) tirtha, BIS MSA—to perform the sacrifice. He is the principal of a college in which the Vedas and the Vedangas are taught and degrees are given. He is also the Assistant Manager of the League of Devotees.

According to time and circumstances, Abhay was engaging this young man in devotional service. Abhay was interested not in collecting disciples but in establishing the League of Devotees. And for that he needed assistants.

Prabhakar Misra: When I first met Swamiji, he said to me, "You're a brāhmaṇa and a prabhākar, and you are eating in a restaurant? You come with me—I will feed you myself, and I shall cook." So we would prepare prasādam, and offering it to the Lord, we would take bhagavat-prasādam together. In this way, by his mercy, I got the chance to take prasādam. He also said to me, "You become keśa-hīn [shaven]." So I went with shaven head to the college where I taught, and everyone laughed at me. When I told Swamiji the situation, he said, "Since you are a medical officer, you can grow out your hair."

Then I took dīkṣā, Swamiji gave me my name, Ācārya Prabhākar. My original name was Prabhakar Misra, so he said, "You don't write the Misra. You are Ācārya Prabhākar." He gave me the name and offered me a tulasī-mālā and put tilaka on my forehead and tied a kaṇṭhi-mālā around my neck. He had registered the foundation of the League of Devotees, and he appointed me as its secretary for preaching throughout the world. We used to go to the villages for saṅkīrtana and Bhagavad-gītā kathā continuously.

* * *

Abhay started a saṅkīrtana movement in Jhansi. At first, accompanied only by Ācārya Prabhākar, he used to walk about the neighborhood of Naybhasti, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. As he continued this practice, his group gradually increased until fifty people were gathering regularly to go out on parikrama, chant together, and visit temples. Afterwards, they would gather at the Radha Memorial for an evening lecture.

When Abhay would go to preach in the nearby villages, he would usually be accompanied by whatever League members were free. Once he went with Ācārya Prabhākar on pāda-yātrā (traveling on foot and preaching) to Chirgoan, some twenty miles from Jhansi. In Chirgoan there lived a nationally known poet, Maithili Saran Gupta, who received Abhay and his disciple at his home for dinner. Abhay told his host that since he was an accomplished poet, he should write something glorifying Kṛṣṇa, and the poet agreed. After preaching in Chirgoan, Abhay and Prabhākar returned to Jhansi, spending one day in each of five villages along the way. At night the villagers would gather, and Abhay would lead kīrtana. He explained to Prabhākar that although most of these simple farmers were not scholars in Bhagavad-gītā or Bhāgavatam, they could achieve the highest spiritual benefit simply by kīrtana. Abhay was well received by the villagers, who begged him to return soon but to give them notice next time so that they could prepare a proper reception.

While preaching locally, Abhay was simultaneously working to give an international scope to his League of Devotees. He wrote to government agencies, asking them to help him expand his genuine educational project, and he also tried to recruit preachers from amongst his friends. He wrote to his old college classmate Rupen Mitra in Calcutta, inviting him to join in worldwide missionary activities.

My mission desires to train up 40 trainees... and I have asked help from the Government for this useful educational purpose. I want that you may be one of the trainees in this regard and you can ask Kartikdada to join us in this spirit. You will know from the papers sent to you how we live and what we do and thus you can make up your mind whether it is possible for you to join us. The first thing is that we want to train up some retired men in the Vanaprastha life and some young men in the Brahmacharya life. I have no inclination for the Sannyas life, which is rather a difficult job for the fallen people of this age. The so-called sannyasis in red garments have spoiled the good name of such order of life. [Abhay also asked Rupen,] Kindly let me know the charges of this advertisement in the English and vernacular papers of Calcutta.

EDUCATIONAL

"Wanted—candidates from any nationality to qualify themselves as real Brahmins for preaching the teachings of Bhagwat Geeta for all practical purposes throughout the whole world. Deserving candidates will be provided with free boarding and lodging. Apply: A. C. Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary of the League of Devotees, Bharati Bhawan, P.O. Jhansi (U.P.)"

* * *

Abhay wanted a deed stating that the Bharati Bhavan belonged to the League of Devotees. So far he had only a promise. Thinking of Jhansi as a permanent headquarters, he wanted a written commitment. When he approached Reva Sankar Bhayal for "a deed of gift," Mr. Bhayal gave Abhay a form requesting him to pay five hundred rupees to register the buildings. But since Abhay had just suffered a loss of seven thousand rupees in Allahabad and had recently spent three thousand rupees in his preaching (much of it going towards the opening-day festival), he found himself unable to raise even five hundred rupees. Ācārya Prabhākar, despite his academic position, had very little money and was being subsidized by his parents with three rupees a day. Most of Abhay's congregation, especially the students, were in a similar position. Mr. Bhayal's request for five hundred rupees didn't seem urgent, nor did he say what would happen if Abhay couldn't pay. But he soon made another request: Mr Abhay Charan De should buy the Bharati Bhavan for five thousand rupees.

It was disconcerting; the generous gift had turned into a purchase offer. The people in town were already referring to the property as Abhay Bhaktivedanta's āśrama, and "The League of Devotees" was printed in large letters across the wall of the compound. When pressed by Abhay's friends, Mr. Bhayal assured them that Abhay could go on living there. But ultimately he would have to buy. Mr. Bhayal said he would give the League of Devotees first consideration and a good price.

Abhay worried, not knowing what the landlord would do next. If the League could purchase the property, that would be best. But he had been unable to raise even five hundred rupees; five

thousand seemed impossible. Abhay found no strong financial backing from his congregation; his League did not include even a single full-time worker.

He did know of one way to raise money: his pharmaceutical business. He still had a small operation being run by his son in Calcutta. Abhay had formerly been earning three thousand rupees a month. He considered approaching Godbrothers for help, but the prospects for earning the money himself seemed more likely. For thirty years he had earned money by his pharmaceutical business, and he could do it again—for the most worthy cause.

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When he arrived in Calcutta in the spring of 1954 he was without money. He chose to live with his Godbrothers at the Gaudiya Sangha in Chetla, the same neighborhood his family lived in. Since he had no money, the head of the āśrama bore his expenses. Abhay gave daily discourses on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which the Gaudiya Sangha brahmacārīs highly appreciated.

Kṛṣṇa Kumāra Brahmācārī: Even after he left, his sweet, melodious voice would ring in my ears. He used to often express a desire to go abroad and preach.

One of his sons was running a small business, Vimaltone Laboratory, and thus supporting the family. Abhay knew that his wife would not be interested in his work in Jhansi; his son had been there but had not been impressed. The family would see his preaching in Jhansi as a threat to their home life. Abhay, however, was sustaining himself by his vision—which was now taking practical shape—of a world reformed by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He even thought of opening a branch of the League of Devotees in Calcutta.

But inevitably he was plunged again into family responsibilities: some of his children were still unmarried, rent and bills had to be paid. Even if he were to develop the Vimaltone Laboratory, the family would demand whatever he earned, and even if he were to accede to their demands, live at home, and give up preaching, the greatest difficulty would still remain: they weren't serious about devotional service. Nor could he change them. What was the use of conducting a business if they would not be devotees?

He visited his family, and the same, old scene occurred. Local friends came to visit, and Abhay began preaching, giving Bhagavad-gītā classes just as he had been doing in Jhansi. Meanwhile, his wife and the rest of the family would take tea in a separate room.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I wanted as much as possible to get her to work with me in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to get her help. But she was very determined. She wouldn't help me in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So finally, after many years, I could understand—she would not be any assistance to me.

She was very attached to drinking tea. I was always telling her not to drink tea, because I wanted to have a nice Vaiṣṇava family. So although I was repeatedly telling her, this time I finally said, “You

have to choose between me or tea. Either the tea goes or I go." In this way, I was even criticizing my own family. But because they were thinking I was the husband or father, they couldn't take my instruction seriously. So she replied, "Give up tea-drinking or give up my husband? Well, I will have to give up my husband, then." Of course, she thought I was joking.

One day, Radharani made a great mistake. There was a system of barter in which a customer would place on a scale an object a shopkeeper considered valuable and the shopkeeper would then balance it with an equal weight of merchandise. So while Abhay was out, his wife took his worshipable Bhāgavatam to the market and traded it for tea biscuits. When Abhay came home and looked for the book, she told him what had happened. She hadn't taken the matter as a very serious thing—she was out of tea biscuits—but Abhay was shocked. At first he felt depressed, but then a wave of absolute resolution passed over him: his family life was finished.

When he told them he was leaving, they didn't understand what he meant. He had been leaving for thirty years. He was always coming and going. When he walked out the door, they thought, "There he goes again. He's leaving." It was the usual routine. Everyone could see, even the neighbors—Mr. De was going again. He had been at home; now he was going. He would be back again. But Abhay knew he would never come back.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Before leaving my family, I wanted to get all my sons and daughters married, but some of them disagreed. But then... the time is up. Never mind whether they are married or not. Let them see to their own business. Suppose I die immediately—who will take care of my daughter? At that time we say, "God will take care." Then why not now? God will take care. My Guru Mahārāja used to say [that renunciation of family life was] "civil suicide." If you commit suicide, that is criminal. But that [renunciation of family] is voluntarily committing suicide—"Now I am dead. Whatever you like, you do."

Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*—give up all religion. So family is *gṛha-dharma*, the religion of the family. But Kṛṣṇa says give that up. But that attachment is there. And if we say that feeling of attachment has to be given up gradually, then that we cannot do, because the attachment is there. But if God will take care of them if I die immediately, then why not now?

His spiritual emotions were so turbulent that he wasn't thinking of going to Jhansi. He wanted to take a train to... anywhere. Then he remembered some old Godbrother friends who were living in an āśrama in Jhargram, only a short train ride south of Calcutta. So he borrowed ten rupees from a friend and bought a ticket to Jhargram.

It was a small maṭha. When Abhay arrived, he was welcomed by Paramahansa Mahārāja, Dāmodara Mahārāja, and others. Paramahansa Mahārāja had been present when Abhay had first met Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and he remembered Abhay as he had looked then, dressed in white khādī, looking like a Gandhian "anarchist." Abhay explained to him, "I couldn't fulfill my family's needs. So now let me preach the message of Lord Caitanya." Abhay told him how his business had failed and how he had willingly left his family and was now destitute.

Paramahansa Mahārāja: When Abhay arrived he appeared very poor, starving. He had no means. He came alone to the maṭha, and when he arrived he only chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, nothing else.

Abhay spent his time in Jhargram chanting the holy name and becoming settled in detachment from his family. For several days he chanted japa almost continuously. Paramahansa Mahārāja would lecture in the evenings, and then Abhay would also speak on Bhagavad-gītā. But as time passed, his thoughts turned again to Jhansi, and he soon felt ready to go back to the League of Devotees. He had to secure the buildings and go on with the preaching.

But before returning he obtained a large Deity of Lord Caitanya that he planned to install at the Bharati Bhavan. Ironically, he had gone to Calcutta to do business and raise money, but now he had no money, no business, and no family responsibilities. He had been married thirty-six years, and now, at age fifty-eight, he had fully taken to the vānaprastha order. Now he could dedicate his life fully to preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

* * *

Abhay did not adopt the saffron dress of a vānaprastha, but continued wearing a white dhotī and kurtā. The people of Jhansi had always known him as a preacher with no family, ever since he had first arrived, a year and a half before. Now he was returning to them with a Deity of Lord Caitanya and a determination to establish Lord Caitanya's temple in Jhansi. Abhay met with a warm welcome from Ācārya Prabhākar and others. But he also met with competition for possession of the Radha Memorial.

It began with a Sanskrit conference, the Bandelk and Sanskrit Sammelan, which brought to Jhansi the governor of the province, K. M. Munshi, and his wife, Lilavati. An active social organizer, Lilavati Munshi had opened several branches of the Mahila Samity Sangha, a society that aimed at socially uplifting women by teaching them secretarial skills and English. Two educated Jhansi ladies, Candramukhi and Suryamukhi, wanted such a women's social program for Jhansi, and they took the opportunity to approach Lilavati Munshi during her visit. She inspired them, and they began to talk about where in Jhansi they could open one of her social centers. Perhaps, suggested one of the ladies, the Bharati Bhavan could be used. Although Suryamukhi Sharma had been one of the sympathizers who had first approached Mr. Bhayal on behalf of Abhay Charan De and had asked that he be given the Bharati Bhavan for his League of Devotees, she felt that the ladies' cause was more important—and she knew that Abhay's ownership of the buildings was not settled. The women agreed that the buildings would be an excellent facility for a Mahila Samity Sangha branch and that their cause was more urgent than Abhay Charan's.

Suryamukhi, assured of support by the governor's wife, called on A. C. Bhaktivedanta. She explained that his league of worldwide Vaiṣṇavas would never take shape. He was a nice person, and she liked him, but she didn't think he could realize his extraordinary expectations. She suggested he vacate the Bharati Bhavan so that the governor's wife could organize a women's social center. "You can go here and there for the sake of building a temple," she told him. "You are free to travel anywhere. But these poor women in Jhansi have nothing, so they must be given these buildings for their use." She found him adamantly opposed.

"No," Abhay said, "find another building." Abhay argued that his work was not just for a section of people, but for all living beings. Suryamukhi left frustrated. Abhay was surprised that a member of

the League of Devotees was now working against him. And the maneuver was being backed by the governor's wife!

Mrs. Munshi could work at a much more influential level, without having to confront Abhay directly and without his even knowing what she was doing. After she talked with Mr. Bhayal, word got around that Mr. Bhayal had been pressured to persuade Abhay Charan to relinquish his claim on the Bharati Bhavan. Mr. Bhayal owned a cinema house in Jhansi and there was talk that he could have a lot of difficulty with his operator's license unless Abhay Charan vacated the Radha Memorial.

In December 1954 Mrs. Munshi wrote Abhay in reference to his failure to raise the five thousand rupees. "Dear Bhaktivedantaji," she wrote, "You wanted to organize there, but you could not. But I have got this institution, Mahila Samity. Why not give it to me?" Abhay was of a mind to resist. He had lawyer friends who advised him that even though he was opposed by the governor's family, he had a good case that would stand up well in court; India's tradition of respect for religious buildings was on his side.

Abhay replied to Mrs. Munshi, introducing himself as the founder of the League of Devotees. He explained the goal of the League, enclosed a copy of his prospectus, and presented many statements by prominent people—Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Sri Sitaram, Raja Mahendra Pratap, and even her husband, Sri K. M. Munshi—praising the wonderful work of the League of Devotees. He also mentioned that the president of the League had recently received a one-hundred-rupee donation in Mathurā from His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Munshi himself. Abhay said that although work had been going on slowly but peacefully in Jhansi, his mind had now been bothered by Mrs. Munshi's negotiations. He requested her not to pressure anyone about his occupying the Bharati Bhavan, though he admitted, "If you or any one of your agents do try... the pressure will be more weightful... I am a nonentity in that comparison."

Abhay hoped that by his presenting the details of his League, she would understand that his was a better cause than the Mahila Samity. He quoted the first three verses of the Fourth Chapter of Bhagavad-gītā, wherein Lord Kṛṣṇa describes how the ancient science of bhakti-yoga is received through paramparā (the order of succession from one teacher to the next) and how kings are responsible for seeing that Kṛṣṇa consciousness spreads for everyone's benefit. He also argued that since, according to Bhagavad-gītā, only a few amongst thousands and thousands of men endeavor for self-realization, and since the League of Devotees engaged its members in self-realization, he was providing an important and rare service. He offered to meet with Mrs. Munshi along with some fifteen sannyāsīs from the area and suggested that she work cooperatively with them and understand the importance of the League. The League of Devotees was benefiting all classes. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said in Bhagavad-gītā, "Even one of a low birth can attain the shelter of the Supreme Lord." But the Mahila Samity, Abhay pointed out, was based on bodily conceptions of caste, creed, color, and sex; therefore, it could not be as important a cause. Abhay closed by requesting Mrs. Munshi not to try to occupy the Radha Memorial, which was already being used for a noble and well-appreciated cause. He signed, "A. C. Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary, League of Devotees."

Aware that he was involved in an intrigue, Abhay organized his thoughts and set down on paper a "Short History," outlining important events surrounding his possession of the Bharati Bhavan.

SHORT HISTORY

1. I came to Jhansi some time in October, 1952.
2. I delivered some lectures at Gītā Mandir on Gandhi Jayanti Day, 1952.
3. Made acquaintance with Prabhakar Sastri.
4. My idea of League of Devotees implemented.
5. He took me to Reva Sankar for Bharati Bhavan.
6. Sri Reva Sankar agreed to hand over the Bharati Bhavan to League of Devotees and he agreed to become a member of it in the presence of Prabhakar, Mitraji, and myself.
7. I write letters from Allahabad to confirm.
8. He confirmed my letter on 10/12/52.
9. Prabhakar intimated the desire of Reva Sankar on 1/1/53.
10. I got the document needed for League of Devotees and came to Jhansi for signature of the members. Reva Sankar signed and agreed to become an executive member.
11. The document was submitted for registration on 4/2/53 at Lucknow... Returned on 10/10/53.
12. The League of Devotees ceremoniously started 16/5/53 and work began. So I am occupying the building since then and continuing my work.

Abhay went on to enumerate more than thirty points, including news publicity and congratulations he had received. He listed the story of how he "came here sacrificing my business and family... I received a telegram from Allahabad instructing the news of burglary by breaking lock. I could not attend the business for work here and it was closed subsequently at a loss of Rs. 7,000."

Abhay thought of turning to some of his sannyāsi Godbrothers for help. If he or they could purchase the buildings, his competitors would be silenced. He thought it worthwhile to interest his Godbrothers in purchasing the buildings as an adjunct to their own missions.

Vṛndāvana was not far away—a four-hour train ride to Mathurā and then a short ṭāṅgā ride. He had gone there on pilgrimage in October of 1953 and had even looked at an available room in a temple near Keśi-ghāṭa, with the idea of staying there some day. He had also traveled there several other times since he had begun residing in Jhansi. This time, he went to the Imlītala temple to see his

Godbrother Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī and ask if he would like to take over the proprietorship of the Bharati Bhavan so that it might be used for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness according to the teachings of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. But Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī was not interested. After approaching another Godbrother, Dāmodara Mahārāja, who was also not interested in Jhansi, Abhay took the short ṭāṅgā ride back to Mathurā to see another Godbrother, Keśava Mahārāja. Keśava Mahārāja was in Mathurā with a group of his disciples to establish a center, but he had not yet located a suitable place. So when Abhay told him about the buildings in Jhansi, he was interested. Abhay and Keśava Mahārāja composed a letter to Mr. Bhayal presenting their requests and the aims of their movement and then traveled to Jhansi in a group—Abhay and Keśava Mahārāja with his disciples.

Keśava Mahārāja and his party stayed for several days in Jhansi, holding kīrtanas and lectures. They had an appointment with Reva Sankar Bhayal, but Mr. Bhayal broke it, so they had to wait to see him on another day. Meanwhile, Keśava Mahārāja had time to form an opinion of Jhansi and discuss with Abhay the likelihood of making this his head quarters. He noted that the people were receptive but that the location was too remote. Even before meeting with Mr. Bhayal, Keśava Mahārāja felt reluctant to stake his whole mission in Jhansi. Abhay agreed, aware that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said that a preacher should go into the big cities and not practice his bhajana in seclusion, and he admitted that after two years in Jhansi he had made no full-time followers.

When they finally met with Mr. Bhayal, Mr. Bhayal failed to present clear terms for purchasing the property. He said they were eligible to buy it, but he made their use of the buildings conditional: he wanted to have a say in the nature of the programs they would hold. Abhay knew that this was just a further sign of shady dealings, and he suspected that Mr. Bhayal was under mounting pressure to give the buildings over to the Mahila Samity. Keśava Mahārāja, having lost all interest, decided to go back to Mathurā, and he invited Abhay to join him.

But Abhay remained. Mr. Bhayal wanted him out, and he even returned Abhay's deposit of 210 rupees, claiming that Abhay now had no justification for residing at the Bharati Bhavan. Abhay noted down the latest events in his "Short History."

29. He has also give me a check for Rs. 210 in lieu of my deposit money with him, but he has no money in the bank. The bank has returned it with remark.

30. The money which was given to him... was misappropriated by him for his own purpose and now he has given a false check with an arrangement with the bank.

31. It is plain cheating to me from the beginning to the end.

32. I must be compensated for all the money before I can leave the buildings.

But he saw it as the inscrutable will of Kṛṣṇa. Events and opinions were turning him against conducting a mission in Jhansi. It no longer seemed auspicious.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I wanted to start from there. It was a nice, big house. It was not given to me rightly, but I was using. So, somehow or other, she got imagination that this house is very nice. She was the governor's wife. Through collector and through government officials, she made pressure. So, of course, there were many lawyer friends. They advised me, "You do not give up." But I thought, "Who's going to litigate?" I thought that, "I have left my home, and now should I take up litigation? No, I don't want this house."

Abhay remembered how the Gaudiya Math preachers had expended their energy for years in the courts. Having terminated his long entanglement with family and business, he had no taste for a legal fight. He could have fought, but he remembered what Keśava Mahārāja had said about Jhansi's being out of the way. Of course, the whole thing had just sprung up here; otherwise Abhay would never have chosen to establish his worldwide League in such an obscure place. The educated young men and women wished him well, just as they had good wishes for the ladies' league, the Theosophy Society, the Arya Samaj, and many other causes. But their good intentions were certainly short of pure surrender and devotion: even his one disciple could offer him only part-time help. But these considerations had not been sufficient to force him out. The real thing was that he was being driven out.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If I did not leave, nobody could drive me, that was a fact. But I thought, Who is going to litigate these things? It is the governor's wife, and she is pressing through collector. The manager who is in charge, he had some cinema house. So they had to renew the license. And the collector pressed him that unless you arrange for this house, we are not going to renew your license. I thought, unnecessarily this man will be in trouble. I will have to pay many rupees, and she is the governor's wife.

He decided to leave. He told his friends to carry on the League of Devotees in his absence. They were sad to see him go, and yet even some of his friends openly praised the work of the ladies' society and were glad to see it come. They had not been able to help him financially, although they knew he had been unable to purchase the buildings on his own.

His closer followers were more affected, but he assured them that their relationship would continue. He would write letters to them—Ācārya Prabhākar, Radhelal Mullik, Mr. Mitra, Dr. Sastri—and he gave them instructions on what they should do. Especially Ācārya Prabhākar—Abhay told him he would be calling for him and expected him to continue as secretary of the League of Devotees, even if they didn't make Jhansi their main residence. Yet it was obvious that this chapter of making ambitious plans for a world movement, going from house to house and village to village, performing saṅkīrtana, lecturing on the Gītā, distributing prasādam—this was ended. And it was not likely that he would return or that the residents of Jhansi could expect to see him again.

When Abhay left the Bharati Bhavan, with its six-foot-high lettering—"LEAGUE OF DEVOTEES"—painted across the outside wall, he felt sad. It had been a natural, spontaneous success for him. The young, educated people of Jhansi had looked up to him from the start, and had it not been for the intrigue, he would never have left. But he felt he had no real choice. He had come as a family man on business and was leaving as a homeless vānaprastha, forced to take shelter

of Kṛṣṇa. His plans were uncertain, but his desire was strong and his health good. So he moved on to Mathurā, carrying with him the Deity of Lord Caitanya.

SPL 8: New Delhi—"Crying Alone in the Wilderness"

CHAPTER EIGHT

New Delhi—"Crying Alone in the Wilderness"

I have got the clue of going "Back to Godhead" just after leaving my present material body, and in order to take along with me all my contemporary men and women of the world, I have started my paper, "Back to Godhead," as one of the means to the way. Please don't think of me as... something wonderful or a madman when I say that I shall go "Back to Godhead" after leaving my present material body! It is quite possible for everyone and all of us.

—From a letter to India's president,

Mr. Rajendra Prasad

When Abhay arrived in Mathurā, he sought out Keśava Mahārāja, who was now establishing his maṭha, and presented him with the Deity of Lord Caitanya. At Keśava Mahārāja's request, Abhay agreed to stay there and edit the Gauḍīya Patrikā. Abhay was given a room, and for the first time (aside from brief visits) he lived in a maṭha with his Godbrothers. As a senior, experienced devotee, Abhay held classes and instructed the brahmacārīs—who were young, uneducated, and even illiterate—in the disciplines of devotional service and the philosophy of Bhagavad-gītā.

He had only recently begun his duties when Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, another sannyāsī Godbrother, asked Bhaktivedanta Prabhu to assist him in New Delhi at his āśrama, Gaudiya Sangha. Both Keśava Mahārāja and Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī recognized Abhay as an accomplished writer and editor and wanted to work with him. It was accepted amongst Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's disciples that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhu was an expert preacher and writer, whether in English, Hindi, or Bengali. Now Keśava Mahārāja wanted Abhay to stay and work on the Gauḍīya Patrikā, while Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja, who had to go to Bengal, was requesting him to come to Delhi to produce The Harmonist (known in Hindi as Sajjana-toṣaṇī). Abhay was agreeable to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's proposition, and Keśava Mahārāja consented, on the condition that Abhay also continue to edit the Gauḍīya Patrikā, at least by mail.

As an editor Abhay was in his element, and he was happy to preach in cooperation with his Godbrothers. Although Abhay didn't consider himself an accomplished scholar or author, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been pleased by his writings and had encouraged him to continue, and now these senior sannyāsīs of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī were turning to him for help. They were practically competing to see who would get the benefit of his services. Perhaps, Abhay thought, this should be his life's work: serving humbly under the direction of his Godbrothers.

His ejection from Jhansi had been a kind of setback; at least it had left him temporarily unsure of how Kṛṣṇa wanted to use him. But now his Godbrothers seemed to be answering the question.

Living and working in an āśrama with brahmacārīs and sannyāsīs was a way of life Abhay had once considered too austere. And Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had remarked, "Better he live outside your company." But now he would either have to struggle alone, with nothing, or stay within the shelter of a friendly portion of the Gaudiya Math. Perhaps he could carry out his desires to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness within the āśramas of his Godbrothers.

Since he would soon be the editor of Sajjana-toṣaṇī, he began thinking of how to expand it. It was a scholarly Vaiṣṇava journal, but cheaply produced and with a very limited circulation. He envisioned it surpassing India's slick Illustrated Weekly; it should be more popular than Time or Life magazines of America. And why not? Kṛṣṇa was no poor man. Abhay thought of how he could start an ambitious subscription program by approaching the many prominent and wealthy men of New Delhi. Then, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, he would soon be able to print color photos and use high-quality paper for Sajjana-toṣaṇī. He would give it his best effort, depending on Kṛṣṇa. And while soliciting subscribers, he could take his book manuscripts and try to get them published. Dr. Allagappa in South India had wanted to publish his Geetopanishad; no doubt there were many men like him. Or perhaps Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī would be willing to publish Abhay's works with funds from the Gaudiya Sangha.

Abhay soon received a letter from Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's assistant, carefully instructing him how to travel to Delhi at the least expense. He was to travel by train third class to Delhi and from there take a ṭāṅgā. Since ṭāṅgās at the station gate charged too much, Abhay should first walk about a hundred meters towards the right-hand side of the station, where he would find a cheaper one. Were he to ride alone, he should pay no more than one rupee and twelve annas, but he should try to share the ṭāṅgā with another passenger—that would be cheaper. "Keeping the crematorium to your left-hand side," the assistant instructed him, "if you look towards the right, then you will be able to see our red flag and the signboard written in Hindi and English. When you reach here, we will pay for the ṭāṅgā."

At the Gaudiya Sangha, Abhay found a disconcerting state of affairs. In the absence of their guru, Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, the brahmacārīs were quarreling and shirking their duties, and as a result the preaching and donation-gathering were being neglected. Cleanliness, Deity worship, cooking, and even peace amongst the devotees were below standard. And like most of the maṭhas of his Godbrothers, the Gaudiya Sangha was poor. Abhay had come thinking he would be editing a magazine, but he found himself contending with a group of quarreling neophyte devotees. He learned that the brahmacārī responsible for giving public lectures had not done any preaching, the devotees who had previously been holding kīrtanas in people's homes were now negligent, and the errand boy refused to run because he had lost his bicycle. Then a brahmacārī handed Abhay a letter from Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī requesting him to take up the general management of the maṭha.

Inspire everyone to be engaged in service, otherwise, I do not know how we are going to print the English monthly magazine... Since we don't have much money in the fund and since the brahmacārīs are quite careless, Akinchan Maharaj wrote that he is unable to take the responsibility of the management. It will be very nice if you could keep your eyes on these affairs.

And Abhay found other obstacles in trying to produce Sajjana-toṣaṇī: no typewriter, and bad relations with the printer.

In a few days, Abhay received another letter from Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, telling him what articles to print, cautioning him not to change essential elements in the magazine, and reminding him of his special duty:

I have asked Akinchan Maharaj to hand over the keys of my room to you so that you may use my room only for your office work. As you are there, you should try to maintain peace in the āśrama for giving necessary instructions to one and all.

Abhay saw that he could do no editorial work until the laxity and petty quarreling in the āśrama stopped. But when he tried to help as Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī had directed, some of the devotees rebelled and even wrote to their spiritual master complaining.

It was against many obstacles that Abhay met the publisher's deadline for the August 1955 issue of Sajjana-toṣaṇī. Yet owing to the printer's delay, the magazine did not come out until September. When at last the first copies were delivered, Abhay sent several to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī in Calcutta, asking for his response.

Abhay never heard from his Godbrother directly, but received further instructions from Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's secretary, Rāmānanda, who pointed out various mistakes in the issue, without mentioning whether Bhaktisāraṅga had been pleased with it. The errors were mostly technical matters of style: Abhay had done the contents page in a different way and had not printed Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's name exactly as he had wanted it on all his articles. Regarding Abhay's request for a typewriter, Rāmānanda wrote that if "the matters are distinctly written there is no necessity of them being given to the printer in typewriting."

Abhay wrote to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī requesting him to return to Delhi and establish a peaceful atmosphere in the maṭha. Regarding Sajjana-toṣaṇī, Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī had suggested that the paper for the cover be improved and that the whole magazine be done on nicer paper by an up-to-date press, and Abhay agreed. But improvements depended on money.

The suggestion... that the paper may be printed from Calcutta is alright. But my suggestion is that either in Calcutta or in Delhi we must have our own press with good equipments so that we may be able to broadcast the message of Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu in all the important languages specially in Hindi and in English. Hindi is meant for all India propaganda while English is meant for world-wide propaganda.

Abhay further reported that since it was almost impossible to expect a printer to work speedily from handwritten manuscripts, he had already rented a typewriter. He also mentioned his ideas for increasing the number of subscribers.

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Abhay's son Brindaban came to live with him for a few months at the Gaudiya Sangha. There was no question of Abhay's returning to his family, and Brindaban simply associated with his father, following the routines of the maṭha and helping Abhay in his duties.

One day a prominent advocate, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha, paid an unexpected visit to the Gaudiya Sangha. The maṭha was mostly deserted, and there was no prasādam on hand, so Abhay and Brindaban received the prominent guest, cooking for him, offering him prasādam, and acquainting him with the activities of the Sangha.

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When Abhay wasn't busy managing the disorganized maṭha and working on Gauḍīya Patrikā and Sajjana-toṣaṇī, he spent his time preparing a Hindi translation of Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Although he was more accustomed to writing in English and Bengali, he reasoned that as long as he was preaching in Hindi-speaking areas, such a book would be important.

Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī wrote that he wanted to print only five hundred copies of Sajjana-toṣaṇī for the September issue. But Abhay wanted to print more. After making an agreement with the printer that the charges would be the same for one thousand copies as for five hundred, he wrote Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, informing him of the good news. Abhay also told him that he had recently secured a donation of printing paper and that he had arranged for a one-quarter reduction in the postal charges.

So why for the matter of saving some papers we shall not print the full number. In my opinion we should print more than 1000 copies every month and distribute them in large scale.

But Bhaktisāraṅga replied through a brief postcard that they should print no more than five hundred.

Abhay continued his attempts to improve Sajjana-toṣaṇī. For him it was not a perfunctory duty but absorbing preaching. In a letter to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, he expressed anxiety over waiting for him to send articles for the next issue. Funds were scarce—so scarce that Abhay had no decent dhotī—and yet he continued to envision a glorious future for Sajjana-toṣaṇī.

I wish to see this paper just to the standard of "Illustrated Weekly" with numerous pictures in order to make it a very popular literature and for this I wish to move myself to secure subscribers as well as advertisers. I wish to visit good businessmen, insurance companies and Govt. officers in this connection. But I have no proper dress at all. I want two sets of good dresses in order to take up this responsibility and I shall be glad to have your decision on this matter. It is my heart's desire that this paper is improved to the highest elevation.

Abhay also requested that Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī help him publish his Hindi Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Some "non-Bengalee gentlemen" were demanding the book and had assured Abhay that they would pay twenty-five rupees per volume. Abhay requested a loan of six hundred rupees, under any arrangement suitable to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, for publishing the first part of this work. "If this part is sold out," Abhay wrote, "the other parts will automatically come out."

But just as life in the Gaudiya Sangha and work on the Sajjana-toṣaṇī under Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's hand produced strain for Abhay, Abhay's ambitions for increased circulation and his

strong editorial opinions also created strain for Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī. In response to Abhay's letter, Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's secretary, Rāmānanda, wrote a letter full of flowery praises of Bhaktivedanta Prabhu, but with the intent of dismissing him from his position with the Gaudiya Sangha.

With innumerable humble obeisances at the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava

Srimat Bhaktivedanta Prabhu,

We received your letter written to Sri Guru Mahārāja on the 5/10/55. Your project is very lofty, and you are a well wisher of our society; we got to know that also...

Since the last two months, in spite of so many difficulties—the difficulties of prasadam and misunderstanding of the devotees there—and in spite of various other difficulties, the kind of enthusiasm that you have shown, that is possible only for an elevated Vaiṣṇava like yourself.

You are a favorite Vaisnava of Śrīla Prabhupāda and a friend of all the special associates of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Most of the devotees in Gaudiya Sangha Asrama in Delhi are new and less respectful. They cannot give proper respect to an elevated personality like yourself... Especially the lofty speculations that you have. Our society, at the present circumstances, has a little ideas. We hope, with all your qualities, very soon you will become settled independently and fulfilling the desires of Śrīla Prabhupāda, start preaching very widely.

We are suspecting that it won't be possible for an able and respectable Vaisnava like yourself to stay there long adjusting with the illiterate and less educated devotees of the Gaudiya Sangha in Delhi. Moreover, you are the head of the editorial board of Srimat Kesava Maharaja's Vedanta Samiti's Gaudiya Patrika and Bhagavata Patrika, so if you spend much time in our asrama then he might become annoyed. With many devotees, he is setting out to circumambulate the land of Braja and we are sure that he will need your assistance in this parikrama. So, you consider all the pros and cons and if you do not neglect the duty as a leader of his organization we will be pleased.

Some articles have been sent for the October issue Sajjana Toshani and some more might be sent. We will be very much obliged if you would instruct Kesavananda Prabhu to publish the October issue. We hope that Sri Sri Guru Maharaja will be able to personally publish the November and December issues. We wish to transfer it to Calcutta from the month of January. Sri Sri Guru Maharaja has become old and most of the time he has to depend on us. We are happy to know that you are trying very hard to publish the Caitanya Caritamṛta in Hindi, but at the present circumstances, it won't be possible for us to invest 600 rupees from our fund in order to print that. Because Sri Sri Guru Maharaja has taken up many projects in different directions now and he has to spend a lot of money, so he can't take the responsibility of printing that book.

Kesavananda Prabhu wrote that your clothes are getting torn, so buy a pair of clothes from the fund of the temple and if the devotees commit offenses at your lotus feet due to their shortsightedness, please forgive them.

(Signed) The servant of the servant of

the Vaisnava, Sri Ramananda Das

It was not a fact that Abhay was being called for leadership in Keśava Mahārāja's parikrama, although it was a good excuse for Rāmānanda's suggesting that Abhay leave the Gaudiya Sangha. So after living as a dutiful member in the āśramas of Keśava Mahārāja and Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja, Abhay was again on his own.

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Without income or institutional shelter, Abhay began staying in various homes in Delhi, living from week to week wherever he received an invitation. In terms of food, clothing, and shelter, these were the most difficult times he had ever gone through. Since his childhood, there had always been plenty of food and good clothes and no question of where he would live. He had been the pet child of his father, and he had received special guidance and affection from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. But now Abhay sometimes felt alone.

Homeless, he moved around Delhi from one temporary residence to another—a Viṣṇu temple, a room at the Kapoor College of Commerce. But he was seeking donors, preaching from Bhagavad-gītā, writing. His goal wasn't to find a permanent residence, but to print his transcendental literature and to establish (or join forces with) a pure, powerful movement for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Abhay made a list of several books he wanted to publish.

1. SHRI CHAITANYA CHARITAMRITA (HINDI)	2,000	pages.
2. GEETOPANISHAD (ENGLISH)	1,200	"
3. SCIENCE OF DEVOTION (ENGLISH)	300	"
4. LORD CHAITANYA'S SAMKEERTAN MOVEMENT (ENGLISH)	300	"
5. MESSAGE OF GODHEAD (ENGLISH)	300	"
6. BHAGAVANER KATHA (BENGALI)	50	"

But to print he needed donors. He called on wealthy men in their offices and homes, presenting his manuscripts and explaining his mission. He had a list of donors, but few responded. And when he did receive a donation, it was usually only five or ten rupees. Occasionally he would receive a letter of appreciation or endorsement.

One appreciation came from Narain Dass Rai Bahadur, a retired executive engineer and secretary of the Birla Mandir Trust, who had attended a public reading Abhay had held in the presence of a

popular guru, Mother Anandamoyee. Impressed by Abhay's reading from his Hindi Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Mother Anandamoyee had donated fifty rupees and suggested that Abhay also visit a well-known sādhu, Sri Hari Baba, who was lying ill in the hospital. Abhay, accompanied by Narain Dass, had then visited Hari Baba, who had claimed that Abhay's reading put him into ecstasy. Meanwhile, Narain Dass was becoming inclined to help, and in December he wrote a letter suggesting that everyone “extend their helping hand for the successful publication of Shri A. C. Bhaktivedanta's various writings in Hindi, English, and Bengali. I wish him all success in his noble attempt.”

Abhay would show this and other such letters to prospective supporters. In Delhi it was not difficult to see government ministers, judges, lawyers, business executives, religious heads; there was always someone willing to hear seriously and, occasionally, to offer support. Thus Abhay, with the two dhotis and kurtās the Gaudiya Sangha had supplied him, with his ability to preach and convince, but with little support and no fixed residence, continued his preaching, undaunted.

Writing and trying to publish was only half his effort; the other half was taking part in efforts for a world movement like the League of Devotees. Through Narain Dass, Abhay inquired whether there might be a way he could do his work under the auspices of the Birla Mandir (one of the largest and richest temples in Delhi). Abhay proposed that he be put in charge of propaganda in the English language, both within India and abroad. Since Narain Dass considered himself a follower of sanātana-dharma, Abhay wrote to him explaining how the teachings of Bhagavad-gītā set forth the real sanātana-dharma. Abhay had many ideas about how sanātana-dharma, as the eternal religion for all living beings, could be expanded and practically applied—if Narain Dass would but help him.

I want to train up 40 educated youths, to learn this science of transcendental knowledge and just prepare them for going to foreign countries for... missionary work...

To start immediately an English paper or to revive my paper “Back to Godhead” in the style of Illustrated Weekly of India...

To organize a Sankirtan party which shall not be only of good singers and musicians but must also be used to [practice] “Sadhana” or self-realization...

Abhay promised that as soon as he had done some groundwork, he, along with men and equipment, could start for foreign countries to propagate this missionary work. But he admitted also that he was externally in dire straits: “Kindly do arrange for the above immediately and give me a proper place to live. I must remove from this temporary quarter by Monday next latest.”

The directors of the Birla Mandir did not take Abhay up on his offer. But he thought of another way of engaging them: he would hold a public meeting at the Birla Mandir to help generate interest in the League of Devotees. He approached Shri R. N. Agarwal, president of the Delhi Municipal Committee, who, after hearing the names of several respectable people who would be attending, agreed to preside over the meeting. Abhay set the date for December 22 and printed five hundred announcements and two hundred invitation cards.

Striking a cosmopolitan note, he stated in his announcement, "By the grace of the Almighty, Delhi is becoming... the centre of cultural association of the world." The leaders of both Russia and India had recently pointed to the need for cultural contact between all nations. But the highest culture, Abhay suggested, was scientific spiritual knowledge; therefore, the best cultural resources in the world existed in India. And these resources, Abhay stressed, should not be left to the unorganized sādhus and sannyāsīs, but should be taken up by important members of society in an organized way.

The December 22 Hindustan Times listed the meeting of the League of Devotees in the "Today's Engagements" column, along with announcements for meetings of the Rotary Club, the Tagore Society, the Indian Council of World Affairs, Bharat Scouts, and the Indian Pharmaceutical Congress.

The League's meeting began with a kīrtana led by Professor H. Chand, and then A. C. Bhaktivedanta, founder and secretary of the League of Devotees, explained his movement's objectives. Then Narain Dass spoke and afterwards read a number of proposed resolutions from the founder-secretary attesting that the persons present supported the League of Devotees and that they recommended that the central government of India also support it as a movement for world peace based on Gandhian principles. After adoption of the resolutions, the meeting closed with another kīrtana and prasādam.

Abhay was convinced that if his well-wishers and fellow humanitarians would support him on a grand scale, he could create a movement for world peace, based on the principles of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. But his role was simply to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness to whomever he could. The results were up to Kṛṣṇa. Abhay was aware that the good intentions of most of the participants in his Birla Mandir meeting would not go past that one meeting. But he wasn't discouraged. Through all his tireless evangelism, he maintained a philosophic jollity. In one sense he was already fully satisfied; he was happy to be working on behalf of his spiritual master.

Although he was changing addresses so fast that his mail could hardly catch up to him, he wrote a newspaper ad for a home study course.

EDUCATIONAL

Study the spiritual secret of "Bhagwat Geeta" at home by correspondence and be a strong man. Full course fee Rs. 50 only. The instruction is imparted not in the ordinary imaginative way of qualified interpretations, but in the "Parampara" system of preceptorial succession. All questions are properly solved. Apply A. C. Bhaktivedanta. Students of all communities and nationalities are welcome.

* * *

He had not published Back to Godhead in four years (since 1952), but he decided to revive it. Back to Godhead was a mission worthy of his full attention, and it took all his efforts—to collect the funds, compose the articles, see to the printing, and then distribute a thousand copies. The money

he would raise by obtaining interviews and soliciting donations. One donor and friend was Justice Bipin Chandra Misra, a Supreme Court judge in New Delhi.

Justice Misra: He used to come to me once a month. I gave him donations for his paper. It was only a four-page magazine, but it showed his study of the subject and his earnestness and his devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He appeared to be a very simple man and modest, and it was pleasant to talk to him. He had a smiling demeanor. The main thing was his humility. He could talk with affection and confidence, and he knew we were discussing things near to God. So every talk with him would subliminate us.

I was a rather important personality at that time in religious affairs. But he would not be expected to make any contribution to the main religious life of Delhi at that time, because of the language difficulty, because his aim was to reach the English-educated persons, not the Hindi ones. And also, because his means and his popularity were not at all established, the magazine did not have a wide appeal among these people. Other religious leaders were all well established. The only thing that impressed one and was worth noticing at that time was the simplicity of his abiding faith in God's name and His mission.

Writing articles was no problem. By the grace of his spiritual master, he was neither short of ideas nor unable to set them down. Translating and commenting on the Vaiṣṇava scriptures, his pen flowed freely. He was inspired by the miracle of the press, the *bṛhat mṛdaṅga*. The work of writing his message down and printing it a thousand times—with the awareness and urgency of speaking directly to everyone, not just people in Delhi or India, but everyone—put Abhay into an ecstatic meditation. He would contemplate how copies of Back to Godhead could reach thoughtful people who might read them gratefully.

Nor was maintenance a problem. In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śukadeva Gosvāmī had declared that a devotee's problem was not food, clothing, or shelter. If one had no bed, he could always lie on the ground and use his arms for a pillow. For clothes he could always find some rejected garments in the street. For food he could live on fruits from the trees. And for lodging he could stay in the mountain caves. Nature supplies all necessities; a transcendentalist should not flatter materialists to maintain himself. Of course, Abhay wasn't living in the mountains or jungle but in the city of New Delhi, yet he had virtually adopted the renounced mode Śukadeva had suggested—not to punish his body or prove himself pure and uncompromising, but because he had to live in poverty if he wanted to regularly produce Back to Godhead.

For Abhay it was a great labor of love, and purchasing paper for printing became a priority even before eating. Neglecting his personal needs for preaching was a manifestation of his faith in Kṛṣṇa, of which Abhay suffered no scarcity. He had full faith that if he served Kṛṣṇa, he would be provided for. To work alone was not an insurmountable problem; it was pleasant and simple. It was better than having to manage the neophyte inmates of the Gaudiya Sangha. The ecstasy of working hard to serve his spiritual master was not a problem. The problem was the condition of the world.

According to the śāstras, the current age, Kali-yuga, would create continual degradation in society. And Abhay could see this evidenced every day in Delhi. Delhi, formerly known as Hastināpura, had been the ancient capital of King Yudhiṣṭhira, who, five thousand years before, under the patronage

of Lord Kṛṣṇa had been the most opulent king in the world and whose citizens had been fully protected and provided for. Now, after a thousand years of foreign subjugation, India was again independent, and New Delhi was the capital.

Yet even in Abhay's relatively brief sixty years of experience, he had seen Indian culture—which in his childhood had retained much of the original purity of the Vedic age—degrade. Now he saw a society in which his countrymen were victimized by the propaganda that they could be happy in gross materialistic indulgence. The British had introduced tea, tobacco, meat, and factories; and now, even after independence, these were a part of India's new way of life. Having driven away the British, the Indians were imitating Western ways, and India's leaders were deliberately ignoring the Vedic principles of God consciousness, the very treasures India was meant to distribute to the whole world. Abhay had seen how India had abandoned her spiritual heritage and gone running after the modernization of the West—but now, where was that material advancement? Were Indians any happier in their independence than they had been in British days? To Abhay, the overpopulated city was a hell of ruffians and fools. Although thousands of poor people were employed in the burgeoning steel mills and tire factories, their living conditions had worsened.

Abhay voiced his concern about these conditions in his *Back to Godhead*. Could the poor eat the nuts and bolts produced in the factories? Could they be nourished by cinema, television, or sex songs on the radio? The leaders were unable to see that abandoning spiritual principles had led to the very ills they officially abhorred: a decadent, rebellious youth, corruption in every area of civic life, and even economic instability and scarcity. When Abhay had been a youth in Calcutta, there had been no cinema billboards advertising lurid sexual fantasies, but now India had developed the third largest movie industry in the world, and film advertisements were all over Delhi. Beef shops and liquor shops had sprung up. The newspapers regularly ran editorials deploring the degradation of young Indian boys who teased, insulted, and affronted women on the street. Women's leagues complained about increased juvenile promiscuity and the obscene treatment of women in films and advertisements. But there were no upright brāhmaṇas or saintly administrators to do anything about it.

Abhay saw the need for a respiritualization of society. But society was rushing headlong in the opposite direction. In February, even as Abhay was trying to publish his *Back to Godhead*, Prime Minister Nehru, while speaking with concern of India's "crisis of the spirit," simultaneously launched another Five-Year Plan for rapid industrialization. Everyone from the prime minister down to the common man was concerned about the symptomatic problems, but no one seemed to understand that the real problem was the lack of God consciousness.

Abhay had to deliver the medicine for the ills of Kali-yuga. He knew it was needed on a much larger scale than he could reach on his own, but even to administer one issue of *Back to Godhead* was almost beyond his means. Writing the articles, typing them, taking them to the printer, and distributing them should not have been the work of one lone, impoverished devotee, but in working with his Godbrothers he had met with their decided lack of organization and their lack of desire for vigorous preaching. Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī had seemed determined to keep Sajjana-toṣaṇī small, and his maṭha, like so many others, had been ineffectual in attracting new members. This was the petty-mindedness that would cripple preaching. Therefore, he was now working alone

on a small scale—happy in his spiritual welfare work, yet aware that his four-page newspaper was only a drop of water in the desert.

In February of 1956—while the U.S. was struggling with civil rights, while Khrushchev and Eisenhower were both openly deploring the arms race and were maneuvering in nuclear disarmament talks, and while the Shah of Iran was visiting New Delhi—Abhay was trying to print *Back to Godhead*. In winter's discomfort he walked through the early-morning streets of Delhi to visit Surendra Kumar Jain, the printer, to read the latest proofs. By walking he saved money. Only when he was delivering paper from the paper dealer to the printer would he rent a ricksha. He had no cādar, only a lightweight cotton jacket, and he wore rubber shoes. He also wore a cotton hat that covered his ears and tied beneath his chin, protecting him from the forty-degree wintery mornings and the sometimes gusty winds.

Kumar Jain: My first impression was that he was a nice person and straightforward. I felt pity also because of the conditions under which he would come. I know he didn't have even twenty-five paisa. He would come all the way on foot and without any breakfast or anything. He would come in the morning to the press, and when I would ask him, "Swamiji, did you have anything to eat this morning?" he would say, "Oh, no, Mr. Jain. I just came because I had to see the proofs."

"That's all right," I would say, "I will get breakfast for you." I would call for breakfast, and then he would sit and work.

He would do the proofreading himself. The printing was done by me, and most of the time he would like to be present when that final printing was being done. He would come in the morning around seven and stay until he had seen all the proofs. It was a regular thing that he would come without breakfast, I would arrange for breakfast, and we would sit across the table from one another for hours together. He was always talking on religious subjects only. But when we would be sitting, especially when waiting for the proofs to come, we would discuss many things. I felt that he knew quite a lot, because he was a well-read person. He was more a friend than just a person coming to get things printed. He was a very simple man, straightforward in his habits. But his mission at that time was particularly to further the movement of *Back to Godhead*.

His financial condition was very, very weak. Sometimes the printing would be difficult because he was not able to arrange for the paper. Many times I told him that if he was feeling difficulty, why was he continuing? But he said, "No, it is my mission, and I will always carry it on as far as possible." I tried to accommodate him to the maximum possible extent. But he was a real pauper.

I only did the printing, and he had to arrange for the paper. So sometimes it was delayed. Although my job was printing, sometimes I would say, "All right, you are so keen. I will give you the paper." But usually he would arrange for it himself, since we only did printing. He would bring it in a ricksha.

We were not uncomfortable together, but as business would have it, if the bills were standing for a long time, then I would ask him if he could do something about it. He would say, "Don't worry, you can be sure that your money is coming." I never asked him where his funds were coming from, because I felt that it was his personal matter. But it was embarrassing for him when he could not

pay, so I never tried to embarrass him. He was concerned that if he didn't have money, how could he print the paper? And he definitely wanted to run that paper.

He wanted to preach the teachings of the Gītā. He thought of it as a sort of movement, that it was the only way that people in the world could find peace. His conviction was very strong.

After picking up the copies from the printer, Abhay would walk around the city selling them. He would take a seat at a tea stand, and when someone sat beside him Abhay would ask him please to take a copy of Back to Godhead. He also went to the homes and offices of people who had already donated or agreed to see him, and he sought out new contacts, sometimes on recommendation or sometimes by going uninvited wherever he could find a potential reader. When he delivered copies to regular donors, he would discuss the previous issue's philosophy with them and sometimes write articles on topics they requested: "Our esteemed friend, Sri Bishan Prasad Maheswari, one of the learned advocates of the Supreme Court, has requested us to write something on the principle of fruitive action with special reference to Vice and its potency." Often donors agreed to see him not so much out of genuine interest or affection as out of a sense of obligation; in their traditional Hindu piety, they felt obliged to see the sādhu, take his paper, and even think well of him—but not necessarily to read his newspaper. Once, when Abhay was approaching a well-to-do house, the owner came onto the second-floor veranda and shouted, "Go away! We don't want you here!"

Abhay, responding to the resistance (polite and impolite) that he met while selling Back to Godhead, wrote an article, "NO TIME, A Chronic Disease of the Common Man," for the March 16 edition.

When we approach some gentleman and request him to become a reader of "Back to Godhead," sometimes we are replied with the words "NO TIME."

They say that they are too busy in earning money for maintaining the body and soul together. But when we ask them what do they mean by the "Soul," they have nothing to reply.

Dr. Meghnath Saha, a great scientist, was busily going to a meeting of the planning Commission. Unfortunately while going in his car on the road he died and could not ask Death to wait because he had no time at that moment.

Dr. Ansari, the great Congress leader, while dying in a moving train, on his way to home, said that he was himself a medical man and almost all his family men were so, but Death is so cruel that he was dying without any medical treatment.

Therefore, Death has been described in the Bhagwat as... the indefatigable. Death is awaiting everyone although everybody thinks that he may not die. There is life after death. The busy man should try to know this also as to whither he is going. This life is but a spot in his longest sojourn and a sane person should not be busy with a spot only. Nobody says that the body should not be maintained—but everybody should know from "Bhagwat Geeta," that the body is the outward dress and the "Soul" is the real person who puts on the dress. So if the dress is taken care of only, without any care of the real person—it is sheer foolishness and waste of time.

Abhay was an unusual newspaper vendor. He didn't loudly hawk his paper on the street or sell it from a newsstand; he approached individuals quietly as they sat to drink tea, or he would call on acquaintances in their offices or places of business. Taking a copy from the stack he carried underneath his arm, he would present what appeared to be an ordinary tabloid newspaper with bold black headlines across the front page. But what odd headlines—"The Lowest of the Mankind," "Philosophical Problems Within Social Awareness," "Sufferings of Humanity," "The Pure Consciousness of Nationalism." Anyone could tell at a glance that this was no ordinary newspaper. Abhay would say something to try to convince them to take it anyway—before they said, "No time."

On behalf of his spiritual master and the previous Vaiṣṇava authorities, he was playing a role, the newspaper salesman—a smiling demeanor, a gentlemanly invitation. No, it wasn't an ordinary newspaper, but they would find it interesting, and it cost only six paisa. Thus he was extending the mercy of Lord Caitanya, handing out the truths of the Vedas in the easy-to-take form of a newspaper.

Despite his desperate poverty and the urgency of his message, his writing was never shrill, strident, or fanatical. He wrote expecting to find his reader prepared to hear sound philosophy and always willing to accept the truth, especially when presented logically and relevantly and supported by the authoritative Vedic literature. Although experience on the streets of Delhi had shown him that people were shallow, distracted, and uninterested in self-realization, he knew that most people, at least at some time in their lives, pondered the crucial themes of philosophy: whether God exists, whether He is a person, why there is suffering. So Abhay appealed to their higher sentiments.

Spring of 1956 brought visits from U.S. Secretary of State Dulles and, a few days later, Lord Mountbatten, the former governor-general of India, who was greeted at the airport by thousands. Then came the celebration of the once-sacred day of Holi, when urchins spray all passersby with colored dyes. Prime Minister Nehru toured the Delhi slums expressing disgust at the prevailing conditions. He announced India's intention to develop atomic energy, stressing its peaceful uses. The weather warmed. A border clash began between India and Pakistan. Delhi railway workers went on strike. Meanwhile, Abhay continued to preach.

He somehow managed to meet the financial, editorial, and printing demands and published his sixth issue for the year of 1956, the May 20 edition of *Back to Godhead*. The front page carried a special notice:

As a matter of Principle

Please read "Back to Godhead" and revive your deeper aspect of personality. There is nothing in it which is our ideology manufactured by imperfect sense-perception but all that it contains are messages of our liberated sages. We are simply helping them to speak again to men and women in easy language for real life. Every responsible man and woman must therefore read it regularly at a cost of very insignificant sum of Rs. 2/4/-a year or As.-/3/-per month. Do not neglect it. It is for your interest. It will create a happy society of humanity.

In "How to Broadcast the Teachings of Bhagwat Geeta," he talked about the need for spiritual organization in society. A model community, which he named Gītā-nagari ("the village where the Bhagwat Geeta is sung"), would live by the Bhagavad-gītā and preach its message to the world. Praising Mahatma Gandhi for his Vaiṣṇava qualities, Abhay suggested that Gandhi had also esteemed the Gītā-nagari concept. It was the only way of relief from the sufferings caused by "demoniac-principled leaders" who were misguiding the present demoralized civilization.

He was calculating how to capture the restless popular imagination. He wanted to present Kṛṣṇa's teachings in a clear, straightforward way and distribute them widely; he felt that good arguments from authoritative scripture would appeal to sane, impartial, educated people, even though they claimed to be uninterested. He knew that somehow, without abandoning his gravity and his absolute conclusion, he must capture their interest. They were relegating religion to some book of scripture on the shelf that they never read, didn't understand, or couldn't believe; he brought it to them as a newspaper—yet it was as good as the scriptures. No, it wasn't what they expected in a newspaper, but they might read it.

The chanting process of the Holy Name of God as conducted by the propaganda of "Back to Godhead" is not pleasing to the superficial pleasure-hunters describing men and women in indecent literatures in national news, but it is the means of relishing the transcendental eternal life.

In addition to selling Back to Godhead at tea stalls and delivering copies to donors, Abhay also mailed out free copies—both within India and abroad. For years, the vast audience of English-speaking readers outside India had concerned him, and he wanted to reach them. Having gathered addresses of libraries, universities, and cultural and governmental outlets outside India, he mailed as many Back to Godheads as he could afford. He prepared a letter for his Western readers, suggesting that they should be even more receptive than his countrymen.

Although the messages contained in...BACK TO GODHEAD are all gifts of the ancient sages of India who actually realised the Absolute Truth, yet at the present moment the so-called leaders of India are too much enamoured by the western way of material advancement of knowledge. They are completely neglecting the treasure house of knowledge left by the sages.

You gentlemen of the western countries have seen much about material science and yet peace is not within your control. In most cases you may be feeling the want of peace although you have enough [materially]. This basic defect of materialism remains undetected by the misleaders of India and therefore they are not serious about going BACK TO GODHEAD, the ultimate aim of life's journey.

On the home front, Abhay sent copies of his latest issues of Back to Godhead to the president of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, along with a letter warning of the perilous fate that awaits a society conducted by asuras—"Please therefore save them from the great fall down." Abhay's letter of November 21 was outspoken.

I have got the clue of going "Back to Godhead" just after leaving my present material body, and in order to take along with me all my contemporary men and women of the world, I have started my paper, "Back to Godhead," as one of the means to the way. Please don't think of me as... something

wonderful or a madman when I say that I shall go "Back to Godhead" after leaving my present material body! It is quite possible for everyone and all of us.

Abhay requested His Excellency at least to glance over the headlines of the enclosed one dozen copies of Back to Godhead and consider granting the editor an interview. There was immense work to be done on behalf of India's spiritual heritage, and there should be a specific ministry of spiritual affairs for this purpose. "I am crying alone in the wilderness at the present moment," wrote Abhay. But His Excellency never replied.

In his Back to Godhead, Abhay was making propaganda against the atheistic view. In "Hope Against Hope," he frankly admitted that eighty percent of the people he met while selling Back to Godhead were atheists.

Sometime we meet gentlemen of up-to-date taste and try to make them interested in the matter of "Back to Godhead"... they say very frankly that they have not only no interest in such theistic subject but also they condemn the attempt to bring back people in general to the path of "Back to Godhead.'

According to these gentlemen, economic conditions of the Indian people deteriorated on account of their too much faith in God and the sooner they forget everything about Godhead, it is better for them. But we cannot agree with this atheistic conclusion of such up-to-date gentlemen devoid of the sense of Godhead.

Abhay argued that although independent India was now educating her citizens in godless materialism, her economic conditions were not improving. Many Indians did not even have the bare necessities of life. He cited that 120,000 were unemployed in Delhi.

Some of the well posted Government servants or some of the fortunate businessmen may feel themselves happy but 90 per cent of their brother citizens do not know how to meet the both ends together and therefore the economic condition is definitely not satisfactory.

He quoted former United States President Harry S. Truman as saying that national independence means that the citizens should have a comfortable life. So if that were the case, said Abhay, where was india's in dependence? His point was that all attempts at happiness and prosperity are unlawful as long as they fail to recognize the proprietorship of the Supreme Lord. An atheistic civilization could never produce peace.

In "Progressive Ambition and Unsatiated Lust," Abhay wrote:

There is no dearth of money but there is dearth of peace in the world. The whole human energy having been diverted to this money making business, it has certainly increased the cheap money making capacity of the total population but the result is that such unrestricted and unlawful inflation of money has created a bad economy and has enabled us to manufacture huge costly weapons for destroying the result of such cheap money making business. The authorities of big money making countries, instead of enjoying peace, are now engaged in making important plans as to how they can save themselves from the modern destructive weapons and as a matter of fact a

huge sum of money is being thrown into the sea for making an experiment on such dreadful weapons. Such experiments are being carried out not only at huge costs but also at cost of many poor lives, binding thereby such nations in the laws of Karma.

Those who unlawfully accumulated money would find it snatched away by taxes for wars and other “agents of illusory nature in the shape of medical practitioners, lawyers, tax collectors, societies, constitutions, so-called Sadhus, famines, earthquake and many such calamities.”

A miser who hesitated to purchase a copy of “Back to Godhead” by the dictation of illusory nature spent up Rs. 20,000/- for a week's ailments and died at the end. A similar thing happened when a man who refused to spend a paisa for the service of the Lord spoiled Rs. 30,000/- in litigation affairs between members of the home. That is the law of nature.

A worker in a New Delhi post office, noticing the title of the magazines Abhay was sending abroad, took the opportunity to argue his atheistic opinions with Abhay.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The postmaster was an Arya Samaja, and he was talking to me about the paper, Back to Godhead. He raised the question, “If we do our duty nicely, then what is the use of worshipping God? If we become honest, if we become moral, if we do not do anything which is harmful to anyone, if we act in this way, then what is the need of this?” Because our paper's name was Back to Godhead, he was indirectly protesting, “What is the use of propagating this philosophy of Godhead if we act nicely?” That is the Arya Samajist's view—how to avoid God.

So I replied that if one is not God conscious, he cannot be a moralist, he cannot be truthful, he cannot be honest—this is our point of view. You study the whole world just on these three points—morality, honesty, dutifulness—but if he is not God conscious, he cannot continue such things. To revive all these good qualities in society, you first have to invoke God consciousness.

A Delhi man, noticing Abhay distributing Back to Godhead, remarked “Where is Godhead? Can you show me God?” Abhay replied to the challenge, but he also pondered a deeper reply as he moved throughout the city during the day. On returning to his room, he began an article, “Where Is Godhead? Is It Possible to See Him?”

In the Secretariat Buildings in New Delhi there is an inscription on the stone that Liberty does not descend upon a people but it has to be earned before it can be enjoyed. Actually this is the fact and we have seen it that much sacrifice had to be rendered by the people of India before they could gain Swaraj. But in the matter of Godhead some irresponsible people ask, “Where is God?” “Can you show me?” “Have you seen God?” These are some of the questions put forward by some irresponsible men who want to have everything very cheap. If for attaining a temporary false sense of liberty in this material world so much labour and sacrifice have to be requisitioned, is it possible to see Godhead The Absolute Truth so cheaply? To see God means complete liberty from all conditions. But is Godhead an attending orderly so that He may be present at my command? The atheist however demands like that, as if Godhead is his paid servant, and he thinks that Godhead is an imaginary thing otherwise He would have appeared before us as soon as the demand to see Him is made.

One time, while he was walking on a secluded street, pursuing his Back to Godhead duties, a stray cow—the kind commonly seen wandering the streets of any Indian town or city—suddenly charged him, goring his side with her horn, and knocked him down. At first he couldn't get up, and no one came to help him. As he lay there, he wondered why it had happened.

Summer came, and the 110-degree heat made it almost intolerable to spend time out of doors. Hot, dust-laden winds blew in the city streets. Streetside hawkers closed their businesses during the day. In early May, during 112-degree heat, a man collapsed in the street and died of heatstroke. But Abhay ignored the heat and the ordinary limitations of the body.

One day while delivering Back to Godhead to various addresses in the city, Abhay suddenly began reeling, half unconscious, overcome by the heat. At that very moment, an acquaintance of his, a man he had approached during his preaching, happened to be passing by in his car, and he took Abhay to a doctor. The doctor diagnosed him as a victim of heatstroke and ordered him to rest.

On June 20, Abhay produced the eighth consecutive fortnightly edition of the year, its front-page article condemning both materialistic family life and false renunciation of family life. It had been almost two years exactly since he had left his home and taken to the vānaprastha order, and his comments on family life seemed autobiographical as well as scriptural. He quoted a statement by Prahlaḍa Mahārāja from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Persons who are always disturbed in mind with cares and anxieties of household affairs may quit off the place which is the black hole temporary abode [family life] to kill one's self and take shelter unto the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead by entering into the forest.

And he admitted, "The management of a family is more difficult than that of an empire."

But trying to avoid family life by living in the jungle without the real spirit of renunciation was "monkey renunciation." In the jungle there were many monkeys, who lived naked, ate fruits, and kept female companions.

The real remedy lies in the act of accepting the service of the lotus feet of the Lord. That makes one free from all cares and anxieties of life. That makes one able to see Godhead always and everywhere.

Real renounced life, therefore, was possible without going into the forest. Even if one remained in the dress of a householder, he could be freed from cares and anxieties by engaging himself in devotional service.

On September 1, U.S. President Eisenhower condemned the Soviet's secret testing of a nuclear bomb equal to one million tons of TNT and scoffed at the Soviet's claims for peace. In the Mideast, Egypt's Nasser nationalized the operation of the Suez Canal, causing an international crisis. On September 20, eighty-one nations met at the U.N. to form a new international agency to help "tame" the atom for peaceful purposes. Abhay saw some of the headlines and heard talk of the latest news from gentlemen he visited. He frankly told them that without Kṛṣṇa consciousness the promises of cooperation by the politicians were all phantasmagoria.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said that if only one soul could be turned into a pure devotee, his mission would be a success. Yet sometimes Abhay became overwhelmed when he thought of how small he was, how much work had to be done on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, and how difficult it was to convince even one conditioned soul.

SPL 9: A Resident of Vṛndāvana

CHAPTER NINE

A Resident of Vṛndāvana

I was sitting alone in Vṛndāvana, writing. My Godbrother insisted to me, “Bhaktivedānta Prabhu, you must do it. Without accepting the renounced order of life, nobody can become a preacher.” So he insisted. Not he insisted; practically my spiritual master insisted. He wanted me to become a preacher, so he forced me through this Godbrother: “You accept.” So, unwillingly I accepted.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

The passenger cars behind the locomotive moved forward almost silently. Thumping at a slow rhythm over the tracks, the train pulled out of the station—past freightyards, a neighborhood of run-down tenements, the old Delhi fort, the garbage dump at Nizamuddin with its hundreds of crows and vultures flying overhead, and then past a marble-domed red sandstone mosque. Seated in a third-class compartment, his luggage stored Beneath his seat, Abhay could see factory workers walking near the tracks, carrying their lunches in metal tiffins, and then the factories, surrounded by huts of mud and straw. He passed the thatched roofs and tarpaulin tents, the cow-dung fires that smoked in the morning air. The tall stacks of the Indraprastha electrical powerhouse spewed out a different smoke, and sooty black clouds poured back from the locomotive. He saw red and violet wildflowers blooming from bramble bushes at trackside, and beyond he saw the road to Mathurā, with its border of fruitless kīkar trees.

It was the morning train to Agra, and there were few passengers. Abhay would be riding as far as Mathurā and then traveling by *ṭāṅgā* to Vṛndāvana. He had ridden widely the Indian railway, especially in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, when he had traveled on business in Bengal, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh.

He had been to Vṛndāvana several times. In his childhood reveries over the train timetables, it had been the first place he had thought of visiting. His first visit, in 1925, had been but a brief pilgrimage while he had been in nearby Agra on business. Then in 1932 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been in Vṛndāvana on *parikrama*. That had been a memorable visit; Abhay had heard him speak at Kosi, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had marked him—“He likes to hear.” And then at Rādhā-kuṇḍa three years later he had been with his spiritual master again. But he had never gone like this—to live there. Dressed in a simple white dhotī, his hand in his bead bag, fingering his japa beads, he looked out the window, quietly chanting the holy name.

The train passed through the dense thickets of Faridabad and into the agricultural fields, with their interspersed patches of wheat, dāl, and sugarcane beginning at trackside and stretching for half a mile to the dry, uncultivated land that continued as far as the eye could see. The train sped faster. Rural villages drifted past the window. An hour out of Delhi, the land was mostly flat and open, dotted with small villages. Occasionally he would glimpse a striking old temple. But mostly it was the land—now barren, with a few palm trees, now cultivated with irrigated fields—under the expanse of blue sky and blazing sun.

For a long time Abhay had wanted to take shelter in Vṛndāvana, and now there was no obstacle. His purpose remained the same: he would write *Back to Godhead* and deliver it to the printer in Delhi fortnightly. As long as he could afford to travel, he would return to Delhi to distribute *Back to Godhead*. But he would live in the shelter of Vṛndāvana. He had in mind the room at the Vamśī-gopālājī temple near Keśi-ghāṭa, a rooftop room that commanded a view of almost all of Vṛndāvana. And since his 1953 visit from Jhansi, he had kept in touch with the temple manager.

In moving to Vṛndāvana, Abhay was following his predecessor spiritual masters. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had had their house at Rādhā-kunḍa and had preached in Vṛndāvana. Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura had lived either in Vṛndāvana or in Navadvīpa, near the birthplace of Lord Caitanya.

Lord Caitanya and His immediate followers had an especially intimate relationship with Vṛndāvana. Lord Caitanya had commissioned Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī to uncover the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana that over the centuries had become lost. Rūpa and Sanātana had left their prestigious government posts and gone to live in Vṛndāvana. Dressed in simple loincloths, they had lived without fixed residence, staying each night under a different tree. They and Jīva Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, known and worshiped as the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, had compiled a voluminous literature on kṛṣṇa-bhakti. They had inspired wealthy Vaiṣṇava patrons to erect Vṛndāvana's great temples: Govindājī, Madana-mohana, Rādhā-Dāmodara, Rādhā-ramaṇa. At Rādhā-kunḍa, shortly after Lord Caitanya's departure from the world, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had chanted one hundred thousand names of Kṛṣṇa and discoursed for several hours daily on the pastimes of Lord Caitanya. There also, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had compiled the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, describing the life and teachings of Lord Caitanya.

Even those Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who did not live in Vṛndāvana kept Vṛndāvana always in their hearts and proclaimed its glories. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* describes the great ecstasy Lord Caitanya felt while traveling from Purī to Vṛndāvana: "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mind was absorbed in ecstatic love at Jagannātha Purī, but when He passed along the road on the way to Vṛndāvana, that love increased a hundred times. The Lord's ecstatic love increased a thousand times when He visited Mathurā, but it increased a hundred thousand times when He wandered in the forests of Vṛndāvana. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was elsewhere, the very name of Vṛndāvana was sufficient to increase His ecstatic love. Now when He was actually traveling in the Vṛndāvana forest, His mind was absorbed in great ecstatic love day and night. He ate and bathed simply out of habit."

Vṛndāvana is the earthly manifestation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal spiritual abode, which the Lord Himself describes in Bhagavad-gītā: "There is another nature, which is eternal and is transcendental to manifested and unmanifested matter. It is never annihilated. It is the supreme destination. When one goes there, he never comes back. That is My supreme abode." Kṛṣṇa's activities of eternity, bliss, and knowledge and His abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana, are described in many Vedic literatures: "I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first progenitor, who is tending the cows, yielding all desires, in abodes built with spiritual gems, where He is surrounded by millions of purpose trees and always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds and thousands of Lakṣmīs, or gopīs."

Although Lord Kṛṣṇa's abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana, is far beyond the material world, when Kṛṣṇa comes to earth He displays His eternal abode in the Vṛndāvana of India. That eighty-four-square-mile tract in north India is identical with the eternal world in the spiritual sky.

To live and die in Vṛndāvana guarantees the devotee's transfer to the eternal spiritual world. The residents of Vṛndāvana, even the animals, are exalted; at the end of life they will transfer to Goloka Vṛndāvana. Lord Brahmā, therefore, prayed that he might take birth as a clump of grass on the outskirts of Vṛndāvana so that these pure devotees would purify him with the dust from their feet. And Vaiṣṇava śāstras declare that even by only a brief visit to Vṛndāvana one can realize the Supreme Lord in his heart.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta states, "Like the transcendental body of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Gokula is all-pervading, infinite, and supreme. It expands both above and below, without any restriction. That abode is manifested within the material world by the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is identical to that original Gokula; they are not two different bodies. The land there is touchstone [cintāmaṇi], and the forests abound with desire trees, although material eyes see it as an ordinary place... The ideal place to execute Kṛṣṇa consciousness is Vrajabhūmi, or Vṛndāvana, where people are naturally inclined to love Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is naturally inclined to love them."

The train arrived at Mathurā. Abhay stepped down with his luggage and looked around, noting the recently constructed Mathurā Junction Building. Proceeding through the gate and out of the station, he found a ṭāṅgā driver, agreed on the fare, and started for Keśi-ghāṭa.

For half a mile the wobbling horse-drawn cart followed the road between the tracks and the railway yard. At the main road, they turned left, passed under a railroad bridge, and entered an open market. Piles of fruits, vegetables, and grains were displayed on the ground, their vendors sitting beside them, bartering and measuring while customers milled about. The women of Mathurā, dressed in brightly colored sārīs—yellows, greens, pinks, and purples—moved busily in the market. The vehicular traffic consisted mostly of bullock carts, the drivers often squatting on the wooden yokes between the shoulders of their animals, whipping alternately one ox and then the other with a length of rope joined to a wooden handle. Although this was the most populated area in the trip to Vṛndāvana, compared to Delhi it seemed simple and rural.

The sun was high, but the ṭāṅgā's top provided a partial shelter, and the summer's heat had passed. Beyond the bazaar the road curved to the right, and Abhay saw the nearby white domes of the massive sandstone mosque marking Kṛṣṇa-janmāsthāna, the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Centuries

ago invading Muslims had destroyed the large Kṛṣṇa temple and created the mosque in its stead, and now directly in front of the mosque stood a newer, smaller Kṛṣṇa temple.

They approached the three-way junction: New Delhi, central Mathurā, Vṛndāvana. The driver struck the horse with his whip, and the ṭāṅgā proceeded along the Vṛndāvana road, edging through a herd of white cows, the herdsman walking amongst them, carrying his stick. The road was busy with ṭāṅgās and slow, creaking oxcarts, loaded with market commodities and pulled by squat, black water buffalo. A string of small, spindle-legged donkeys carried oversized loads of firewood and sandbags.

Although much had changed in Abhay's life since he had come here to see his spiritual master during the parikrama years ago, Vṛndāvana had remained the same. He felt he had done the best thing in coming here, leaving the heat, the traffic and fumes, the human passions of Delhi. It was a natural relief. Yet even as he felt transcendental emotions for Vṛndāvana, impressions of his months of preaching in Delhi lingered in his mind—the city streets, and himself, going from place to place with his Back to Godheads. Life in Delhi had been constant, vigorous preaching. Now he was more than sixty years old, but he was not coming to Vṛndāvana to retire. He had retired from household responsibilities, but not from his responsibilities of making Back to Godhead as popular and sophisticated as Illustrated Weekly. He would live in Vṛndāvana and commute to Delhi. But he would never stop preaching.

The sight of taller trees signaled the precincts of Vṛndāvana, as the thin horse trotted along, past the police station and water trough for animals. On either side appeared the garden courtyards of private estates and āśramas. Fragile white mālatī flowers, golden marigolds, frangipani trees, red hibiscus, “trees of sorrow,” and many other flowers and trees, some known only in Vṛndāvana, bloomed forth in the brilliant sunlight. The Rādhā-Govinda temple loomed fortresslike on his left, and opposite, in the distance, the high-rising tower of the Raṅganātha temple. They entered narrow streets, tighter and busier places with markets and city dwellings, and then it became quieter again. At the end of a narrow street, by the Yamunā River, near the Keśi bathing ghāṭa, stood the small and beautifully ornate entrance of the Vamśī-gopālajī temple, a narrow three-storied building with three domes and many decorated arches.

After stepping over the curbside drain and walking up three marble steps, Abhay entered the front door, the driver following him, carrying the luggage. Once inside, Abhay removed his shoes and entered the courtyard, which was open to the sky through a metal grate, on which a few birds sat two floors above. A column of sunlight lit one side of the courtyard, where a potted tulasī sat atop a pillar. The temple seemed cool and quiet. Adjacent to the courtyard was the Deity room, its doors locked shut. Overhead was a mezzanine with rooms whose entrances were visible from the courtyard; a few sārīs and strips of cloth hung on improvised clotheslines.

Mahant Gopal, the temple pūjārī, whom Abhay had known since 1954, greeted him cheerfully. He was about the same age as Abhay and had long gray hair and an unruly beard. Although Abhay's attire was modest, he appeared well dressed compared with Gopal, who wore only a coarse dhoti.

Gopal led Abhay upstairs. Coming out onto the roof, Abhay smiled to see again the wonderful vista. Barely a hundred yards away he could see the Yamunā, not only the immediate patch of water

flowing before him, but to his left and right a broad curving sheet of river shimmering in the afternoon sun. There were sand deltas, herds of cows and buffalo grazing, the flat grassy banks of the Yamunā, and plains and trees as far as the eye could see. And in the opposite direction was the town of Vṛndāvana, marked by dozens of temple spires and domes.

Abhay's room, the only one on the roof, was small, with narrow double doors and barred windows. Sitting on the apartment's roof, monkeys with their tiny offspring sat watching, unalarmed. Just outside the door, a two-foot-high cement pyramid signified that the temple Deity was directly beneath. Abhay entered the room. Through the barred windows he could see the palace at Keśi-ghāṭa, the venerable tower of the Gopīnātha temple, and, beyond, the uninterrupted, flat river, the green banks, and the sky.

After acquainting Abhay with the details of the room—the small kerosene burner, the rope and bucket for drawing bathwater from the well to the roof—Gopal meticulously produced a government-stamped rental agreement. Abhay wrote a short paragraph, declaring himself a disciple of the late Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda and attesting to his renting the room at five rupees per month. Both parties signed.

After his bath, Abhay took prasādam and rested. When he heard the bells ringing in the temple below, he went down to see the Deities. Gopal, who had been the temple's pūjārī for many years and had seen its reconstruction in 1923, had told Abhay that the temple Deity, Vāmśī-gopālajī, had been installed 350 years before by Mahant Pahlāda dāsa of the Nimbārka Vaiṣṇava-sampradāya. Gopal himself had installed the Deity of Rādhārāṇī. Vāmśī-gopālajī, standing in a graceful threefold-bending form and holding His flute, was very appealing. He was three feet tall and of black marble; Rādhārāṇī, slightly shorter, was of brass. They were simply dressed in rough white cotton and illuminated by the dim glow of a kerosene lamp. Abhay could see that They were being cared for, but because of poverty there was no opulence.

He returned to the roof as the sun was setting over the town of Vṛndāvana. Having the entire roof's walkway to himself, Abhay walked and chanted japa, enjoying the cooling early-evening breeze from the Yamunā. Occasionally a solitary boat would pass on the calm waters of the Yamunā, and a devotee, somewhere unseen, could be heard chanting evening prayers at Keśi-ghāṭa. He felt pleased with this location in the heart of the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was not a newcomer spending his first day in a strange town; everything here was already familiar and dear. As Vṛndāvana was Kṛṣṇa's abode, Abhay was Kṛṣṇa's servant, the servant of the six Gosvāmīs, the servant of his spiritual master. He felt at home.

As day turned to twilight, temple bells rang throughout the town. Abhay walked to the western side of the roof and looked into the city of thousands of temples. The Govindajī temple, the Rāṅganātha temple, and thousands of smaller temples were having their sandhyā-ārati and kīrtana, glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Abhay responded to the sights and sounds of Vṛndāvana as only a pure devotee could; his thoughts and emotions were full of appreciation and awareness of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's devotees, and Kṛṣṇa's land. Naturally he began to think of preaching, hankering for others to know the intimate peace and ecstasy of Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was inviting all souls to join

Him in His eternal abode; yet even in India, few understood. And outside India, people knew nothing of Vṛndāvana or of the Yamunā or of what it means to be free of material desires. Why shouldn't people all around the world have this? This was the abode of peace, yet no one knew anything of it, nor were people interested. But this is what they were actually hankering for.

Abhay thought of Back to Godhead and how, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, he might expand his preaching beyond India to the whole world. His Godbrothers... it would have been better if they had all worked together in the Gaudiya Math, but many of them were at least keeping the regulative principles. None of them, however, seemed to be doing much beyond maintaining a temple here, an āśrama there, worshiping a Deity, eating and sleeping. But there was so much more to be done in broadcasting the glories of Vṛndāvana. Abhay chanted and thought of Kṛṣṇa. Gradually he turned to his task of producing the October issue of Back to Godhead, due to be printed shortly in Delhi. He had a deadline to keep.

The next morning, before sunrise, the residents of Vṛndāvana were austere, bathing in the Yamunā, performing pūjā to their Deities, reciting mantras. But Abhay was awake even before most, writing in stillness beneath the light in his rooftop room. As he wrote diligently in English, scriptural references appeared and took their place within convincing arguments. For hours he wrote, page after page in an exercise book, until gradually the chirping of awakening birds signaled the end of the dark night's stillness. Soon the sun would rise.

Keeping to his regular schedule, he put aside his writing and began chanting japa, staying in his room, uttering the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra in a soft, deep voice. Even before the first traces of light in the sky, before the river was visible, a few bābājīs reciting prayers made their way through the streets, heading for the Yamunā. By 4:00 A.M., gongs and temple bells throughout the city heralded the maṅgala-ārati of the Deity. Abhay continued chanting alone for another hour. Then he prepared to bathe, lowering the bucket on its long rope and hauling water up to the rooftop.

It was light when he went out, his bead bag around his neck, a few copies of Back to Godhead in his hand. Turning right at the temple door, he walked the tight, crooked lane, past alleys, dirt paths, and cross lanes, which interlaced in a winding network. There were no shops in the area, only silent buildings, many of them hundreds of years old. The neighborhood was serene. Behind closed shutters, someone played on wooden clackers and sang Hare Kṛṣṇa softly. At a crossroads where dark women filled brass waterpots from a well, Abhay turned left onto a street lined with small, open porches. On either side he saw ornate temple architecture: one entrance marked by two stone lions, another by a carved elephant with teeth like a tiger's. A brick-and-mortar wall was crumbling with age.

Soon Abhay arrived at the Rādhā-ramaṇa temple, established almost five hundred years before by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of Lord Caitanya's chief followers. Here residents of Vṛndāvana were coming and going according to their vows, following a strict schedule that allowed not a moment's delay, making their daily visit to various temples. Abhay entered and stood amidst a group of worshipers, viewing the Deity of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā-ramaṇa. The Deity, wearing a fresh garland of flowers, His enchanting black form adorned with bright silks and jewels, appeared very opulent.

Knowing the priests of Rādhā-ramaṇa to be respected, learned Sanskritists, some of whom also read English, Abhay had brought with him a few copies of Back to Godhead. He met Viśvambhara Gosvāmī, a young priest in his thirties who after the death of his father had left his law practice and taken over some of the temple management. The temple was run under a “caste gosvāmī” system, and thus for five hundred years Viśvambhara's ancestors had handed down charge of the temple. Although Viśvambhara had met many sādhus, he was immediately struck by Abhay's gentle and humble demeanor. He accepted the copies of Back to Godhead and sat and talked with Abhay.

Abhay then continued along Vṛndāvana's winding lanes to visit an other temple, Rādhā-Dāmodara. He passed old bābājīs and women carrying water, a commercial shop beside an open porch where people worshiped a Śiva liṅga. Monkeys sitting atop a high concrete wall and ranging from roof to roof, ledge to ledge, chattered and gestured as Abhay walked beneath. As the morning progressed, barefoot children had begun to appear more frequently, playing within the open doorways. As he walked along chanting japa, his right hand in his bead bag, his lips moving softly, hardly anyone in Vṛndāvana knew him. But as an elderly, cultured Bengali gentleman, he did not seem an unusual sight; he was a religious bābū in a town devoted entirely to religion.

* * *

Abhay would regularly visit Vṛndāvana's important temples, and afterwards he would shop, returning to his room around eleven with vegetables for cooking. Using the kerosene burner and a three-tiered cooker, he would cook rice, potatoes, and sometimes sabji. He would also cook capātīs. He would take only one meal a day, at noon, and in the evening a cup of milk. When he did not have time to cook, he would take the prasādam of the Deity. After lunch he would nap for fifteen minutes and then write. He rarely received visitors, but stayed alone, writing.

Just before sunset, he would again go out visiting temples. At Keśi-ghāṭa he would pass by sādhus sitting alone here and there, facing the Yamunā. The river itself was little trafficked, sometimes a boat or two slowly moving on the river's placidity. Sometimes a fish splashed in the water, or a bird winged along the river, watchful. Keśi-ghāṭa was quiet and beautiful, especially after the sun had relented for the day. Sādhus would hail Abhay on sight with Vṛndāvana's common greeting, “Jaya Rādhē!” and Abhay would return his “Hare Kṛṣṇa!”

When in the evening he walked through town, he would find himself amidst the vibrations of one kīrtana after another. In the temples of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Caitanya, Nṛsimha, or Śiva, in āśrama halls, in homes, even amongst groups walking on the streets, there would be kīrtana: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. He would often see Bengali widows gathered together in a hall. Thousands of them lived in āśramas in Vṛndāvana, staying together with few wants, wearing dull white sārīs, keeping their hair cut short, never leaving Vṛndāvana even for Mathurā, wanting only to stay in Vṛndāvana, to die in Vṛndāvana chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. A man would sit playing mṛdaṅga and leading a chant while a group of widows clapped their hands unevenly, responding in their childlike voices. The drum, the clapping, the singers—unpolished but earnest—made a sweet sound in the evening. As Abhay walked, no sooner would the sound of one kīrtana fade than another would rise loudly before him and then fade behind him as another rose to meet him, a temple bell ringing formidably, intermingling with

the drums, cymbals, and chorus of another group or a single person passing nearby singing his own “Rādhe, Rādhe.”

Even the greetings were kīrtana: “Jaya Rādhe!” “Haribol!” As faces passed, as carts clattered by, as men joked or made their last transaction of the day in the market, and as stray cows made their way home, their bells clanging around their necks, somehow everything was in connection with Kṛṣṇa. And as Abhay returned to the secluded Vaiṣṇī-gopālajī temple, there also he would hear kīrtanas, only more private, perhaps only a husband and wife in their room, the man playing mṛdaṅga and singing one line of a bhajana, his wife singing in response. Vṛndāvana was not ordinary. Every singer sounded sweet, in his own way an expert melodist, and everyone sang of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa was present in every occasion and event.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The glories of Kṛṣṇa nobody can understand. Similarly, Vṛndāvana. The land which is known as Vṛndāvana also has unlimited potency. When you go to Vṛndāvana, you will find unlimited potency of spiritual atmosphere, still. If you go to Vṛndāvana, you will see so many saints and sages—still they are worshiping Vṛndāvana-dhāma. As Lord Kṛṣṇa is worshipable, similarly His place, Vṛndāvana, is as good as Kṛṣṇa. It is also worshipable.

* * *

Commuting became difficult. He would take the morning train into Delhi and, having nowhere to stay, return to Vṛndāvana the same night. That didn't give him much time in Delhi, and it was expensive. At first he had stayed with Mr. Gupta, a pious gentleman who studied the Gītā regularly and afforded sādhus a place to stay. Abhay had explained to Mr. Gupta about his Back to Godhead and his desires to preach in the West. It had been a good arrangement, and Abhay had kept to himself, writing. But in time another sādhu took the room.

Even with his minimal personal expenses, it was difficult to raise enough in donations to cover traveling, printing, and mailing. Giving copies of Back to Godhead away wasn't difficult, and he was doing that in Vṛndāvana. But working alone—writing, editing, selling, soliciting donations—was too much. The printer, Mr. Jain, was amazed, wondering why a person would put himself through such difficulties, printing a newspaper he couldn't afford.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I worked for Back to Godhead day and night. In the beginning, when I was a householder, I did not care if somebody paid or not paid. I used to distribute liberally. But when I left my household life and I was living alone, sometimes in Vṛndāvana and sometimes in Delhi, or sometimes traveling for pushing on BTG—they were very hard days.

After his twelfth consecutive fortnightly edition, the issue for November 20, 1956, Abhay ran out of money. Mr. Jain had to throw up his hands, saying he couldn't print simply out of friendship. Abhay returned to Vṛndāvana, where he spent his time writing but with no plan for publication.

It was because people weren't interested in becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious—because they had “no time”—that Back to Godhead had failed financially. Certain sādhus in India were celebrated and influential, but Abhay was not amongst them. Of course, the uncompromising preaching he had learned from his spiritual master, the “chopping technique” in which he openly criticized revered

politicians and holy men, was not likely to win him favor and patronage. "Don't flatter," Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said. "Speak the truth. And if Kṛṣṇa is pleased, then you will come out successful. Money will come." And Abhay had firm faith in this.

That was his outstanding asset—his faith in his spiritual master. He was sure that by following Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, he would receive his blessings and the blessings of Lord Caitanya. Although for the last two years he had followed any path that had opened as far as it had led, he had remained one-pointed, aimed at serving the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He was confident. Sooner or later he would obtain substantial backing, he would find a sympathetic audience, sincere workers would join him.

A letter came to Abhay in Vṛndāvana from his disciple, Ācārya Prabhākar Misra, and it gave Abhay an idea. Ācārya Prabhākar, who was in Bombay working as secretary of the Sanskrit Department at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, invited Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Prabhū to join him there for preaching together, just as in the old days. The founder-director of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan was Governor K. M. Munshi (the same governor whose wife had pressured Abhay to give up the Radha Memorial in Jhansi). But Ācārya Prabhākar, having recently established a friendship with the governor, intimated to Abhay that the governor might be willing to help. Thus in January 1957, after assuring Mahant Gopal that he would return and that he would send five rupees a month for his room, Abhay traveled to Bombay.

Ācārya Prabhākar got Abhay quarters in the faculty residence and introduced him to various scholars and religionists. They then attended a lecture by Governor Munshi, "What Is Wrong With the World?" Afterwards, Abhay approached the governor, expressing his appreciation of the speech, but stressing that it would take a spiritual movement to avert the imminent global disasters. Without God consciousness, even Mr. Munshi's work in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan would be a waste of time. Abhay spoke of his interest in reviving the League of Devotees, and he suggested how he might work within the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to infuse the life of God consciousness into the governor's cultural projects. Governor Munshi responded by offering Abhay a post as Honorary Professor of Bhagavad-gītā. Abhay accepted and gave the governor some copies of Back to Godhead, requesting that he read them in his spare time.

As Honorary Professor of Bhagavad-gītā, Abhay began each class with Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana and then lectured on the Gītā, presenting Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but he soon found his post confining. Within the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, he found little scope for reviving the League of Devotees.

Then, along with other members of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Abhay attended the fifth annual convention of the World Academy of Sanskrit at Kurukṣetra (where five thousand years before, Lord Kṛṣṇa had spoken Bhagavad-gītā). India's president, Dr. Rajendra Prasad; Governor Munshi; and many scholars and paṇḍitas from all over India participated in the discourses. But everyone there had his own thing to say, apart from the conclusions of Lord Kṛṣṇa, so Abhay considered the meeting a waste of time. Since he was not scheduled to speak, since the nondevotional discussions on the Gītā disturbed him, and since he saw that nothing practical would come of such a theoretical meeting, he left Kurukṣetra and returned to Vṛndāvana.

Ācārya Prabhākar soon joined Abhay. As they talked together in Abhay's room at Vamśī-gopālājī temple, Abhay spoke again of his desire to revive the League of Devotees. After having recently seen the watered-down cultural programs in Bombay and Kurukṣetra, he felt even more keenly the need for a society of pure devotees. There were already so many cultural and religious organizations; if he liked he could join one. But where was that organization with which he could affiliate himself wholeheartedly? Only the League of Devotees espoused the conclusions of Lord Caitanya and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī: vigorous, worldwide preaching of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Abhay drafted "An Appeal to the Generous Public, Modern Philosophers, Leaders, and Religionists" on behalf of the League of Devotees. The activities of the League, he stated, would be to publish Back to Godhead in English (with translations in many other languages), to educate young men and women for worldwide preaching, and to operate a press solely for printing transcendental literature. These programs would require an estimated three thousand rupees per month, and he appealed for help. Abhay concluded, "Vrindaban is the sacred place of topmost importance and the Headquarter of this League is therefore situated here." Using the impressive new titles, Honorary Professor of Gītā, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and Honorary Secretary of Hari Bhavan, Abhay, with the assistance of Ācārya Prabhākar, launched another attempt at rallying support for Back to Godhead and the League of Devotees.

Within a few days, Ācārya Prabhākar returned to his post in Bombay, and Abhay was again alone in Vṛndāvana. He loved Vṛndāvana, yet with no means to publish and preach, he was not content there. If he were to travel, he might be able to enlist members for the League. He thought of Kanpur, which was nearby, a city of more than one hundred big factories and many wealthy industrialists, some of whom he had met during his business travels. He decided to go. After printing some League of Devotee membership forms, he explained to Mahant Gopal that he would be away for a couple of months.

The Mahant was surprised. Although most elderly sādhus who came to Vṛndāvana stayed put and some even took vows never to leave, this quiet bābū was coming and going constantly.

* * *

Abhay preached actively in Kanpur, staying in various homes and canvassing for League members. As the guest of the Anandesvar Satsang Mandal, he lectured regularly at the popular Parmat bathing ghāṭa on the Ganges. He especially made acquaintances among industrialists and educators, often sitting and conversing with them for hours, and many were impressed by his dedication and his soft-spoken talks. But his collections were small. When he offered the wealthy magnates his "constitutional membership," they usually opted in favor of the two-rupees-a-year "subscriber membership." He collected a few letters of appreciation, but after two months he left.

After some months in Vṛndāvana, Abhay decided to go back to Bombay and preach. In Bombay, he quickly broke off his association with the stifling Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and moved out of the faculty residence there. Staying a week at a time in the homes of various patrons, he tried to generate interest in his missionary activities. When a friend of Ācārya Prabhākar's arranged for Abhay to address Sunday-evening crowds at a Bombay beach, Abhay accepted. Following already

established custom, he sat on a cushion, and the people gathered—from five hundred to a thousand, sitting and listening—as he loudly spoke the philosophy of Bhagavad-gītā. Abhay spoke for several nights. And there were other lecture opportunities also. One week he spoke several times at a Bombay Viṣṇu temple.

But Abhay wanted to do more than deliver occasional lectures to uncommitted audiences. The conviction was growing within him that he should preach outside India. The idea, of course, had been there for some time. He had expressed it in his prospectus for the League of Devotees, before gatherings at the Radha Memorial in Jhansi, during his meeting at the Birla Mandir in Delhi, and on many other occasions. Informally he had expressed it hundreds of times to acquaintances. And he had woven his dream throughout his writings.

He was ready to travel anywhere if he could fulfill Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's order to preach in English. In India the English-speaking population was small, so Abhay continued to dream of going to the West. If he could travel to Bombay, Delhi, and Kanpur, why not to London or New York, where millions spoke English and had never heard the message of Lord Caitanya? Writing to Mr. Ved Prakash, a Kanpur industrialist, Abhay explained his idea.

Lord Chaitanya said "Praminam" "Upakaraya"; i.e. to say for the benefit of all living being concerned... While rendering first aid service in the battlefield the Red cross men although equally disposed to all the wounded soldiers—they give first preference to the hopeful ones. The hopeless ones are sometimes neglected... .

In India, even after the attainment of Swaraj, the mentality is predominant by "Made in London" ideas. It is a long story. But in nutshell the Leaders of India in the name of secular Government they have engaged themselves in everything foreign. They have carefully set aside the treasure house of India's spiritual asset and they are imitating the westernised material way of life, constantly engaged in the acts of error of judgement, misgivings, imperfectness and duplicity.

India's vedic knowledge is above all the conditional defects mentioned above but we Indians at the present moment have neglected such wonderful vedic knowledge. It is due to its improper handling...

This Vedanta Sutra is now mishandled by unauthorized persons of different camps and as such the people are being misguided. Newly sprung up national enthusiasm of the Indian leaders, Industrialists, and plan makers, has no time neither desire to understand the message of Vedanta Sutra or even the Bhagwat Geeta. You cannot do acts of humanity without proper guidance...

So my idea of preaching in the foreign countries means that they are rather fed up with material advancement of knowledge. They are seeking the message guidance of the Vedanta Sutra or for the matter of the Bhagwad Geeta in an authorized way. And I am sure that India will again go back to the Vedantic life when the principle is accepted by the Europeans, Americans etc because the Indian people are now in the habit of begging, after neglecting their own property. That was my view point. But all the same we must take only the opportunity of service...

One way of expanding his way of preaching was to mail copies of Back to Godhead outside India. And as an incentive for enlisting donors, he made it known that the donor's name would be printed on each copy. His ambition was to bring in large donations, run large printings, and send Back to Godhead to more than fifty countries. He assigned quotas: America would receive ten thousand copies, Argentina five hundred, Belgium five hundred, Brazil five hundred, Burma one thousand, Canada five hundred, Chile five hundred, China ten thousand, and so on, including ten thousand for Russia and ten thousand for England. But the donors and donations never appeared, and the plans for Back to Godhead were never realized.

Abhay found that while the people of India's educated, cultured class were rejecting their own spiritual culture, the religiously inclined masses were being baffled by an array of conflicting, unauthorized doctrines presented in the name of Hinduism. An alarming example of this came to his attention as he was preaching in Bombay during the summer of 1958. "Bhagwat Week" was being publicized by a group whose teachings conflicted with the pure paramparā presentation of the Bhāgavata. The Bhāgavata, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, was the devotional scripture par excellence, the literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, yet the organizers of Bhagwat Week were using Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to teach impersonalism and minimize Lord Kṛṣṇa. Through friends, Abhay learned of the outrageous meetings, and finally, on July 28, 1958, he wrote to the Bhagwat Week leader, Sri Ratanshi, imploring him to stay away from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

I beg to inform you that I am in receipt of your invitation letter in the matter of observing Bhagwat week through the secretary of Bombay spiritual Centre. As I know what sort of Bhagwat week can be observed by the Mayavadins for misleading the innocent public and therefore I not only restrained myself from attending the function but also I advised many others not to attend, for the very reason that the recitation of the holy Bhagwat is being performed by men who have no access in this great scripture, in which only the liberated persons, who are freed from all pretentious religiousities, can take part... Some friends who attended your Bhagwat week have told me how the pastimes of Lord Krishna [were] being wrongly interpreted in your organisation on the pretext of saving Krishna from being an immoral personality. To save these foolish audiences in future, Maharaj Parikṣit had already asked Sripad Sukhdeva Goswami to clear the Rasaleela activities of Lord Shri Krishna. The transcendental nature of Rasaleela does not require to be apologised by any Mayavadi or mundane moralist. The Leela is what it is.

In the sloka No. 30 it is forbidden that a mundane person should indulge in hearing Rasaleela or... should hear Rasaleela from a mundane person. In your organisation both the audience and the lecturer are mundane persons and their indulgence in the matter of Rasaleela out of sheer foolishness will result in imitating Rudra, who swallowed up an ocean of poison.

Abhay warned that legal action could be taken against such a religious fraud. But Bhagwat Week continued, and hundreds were cheated.

While the professed followers of Vedic culture were being baffled in their allegiance, modern Westernized Indians were rejecting Vedic culture as backwards and irrelevant. There was Prime Minister Nehru, who wasn't at all spiritually inclined; he was for modernization and for what Abhay called "Made in London" ideas. At least Mahatma Gandhi, although he had never responded to Abhay's letters, had been spiritually inclined. But not so his follower, Pandit Nehru. Still, out of

concern for the way India's leaders were rejecting their country's spiritual heritage, Abhay decided to write Pandit Nehru.

Although in Bombay Abhay was practically homeless, in August of 1958 he boldly wrote the prime minister, expressing his conviction that India's spiritual culture must not only be revived at home, but also be distributed to the West. He reminded Pandit Nehru that from ancient Greece down to the atomic age the Western world had seen only materialism and had therefore never known peace. If Nehru were to continue following the path of materialism, the only results would be strife and war.

Therefore, India may not waste her time in imitating the western way of life. You have admitted it that the position of Indian culture is of high order, but at the same time you want to bring in material prosperity by scientific advancement of knowledge. But what is that scientific knowledge? Spiritualism is also advanced scientific knowledge. Material advancement of scientific knowledge cannot give even material prosperity to the people in general. Do you think that horseless carriage, or telephonic or radio communication or any other such ephemeral facilities of life can bring in material prosperity? No it cannot. Material prosperity means the people must have sufficient to eat or to maintain the body very soundly. Do you think that your different plans have brought in that material prosperity or that modern western civilisation can bring in that prosperity? Even they are given that facility, the unrest will continue to go on till there is spiritual satisfaction of life. That is the secret of peace.

Even without having been to the West, Abhay expressed his conviction that the Americans and even the Russians were hankering for spiritual realization; they could not have become satisfied merely with material advancement. Pandit Nehru, therefore, should help his friends in the West by offering them spiritual knowledge from India.

Poverty means poverty of knowledge. Prime Minister Chanakya used to live in a thatched cottage but he was the dictator of India during the time of Chandra Gupta. Mahatma Gandhi voluntarily accepted the way of living of the so-called poor man and was the dictator of Indian destiny. But was he poverty stricken? He was proud of his spiritual knowledge. Therefore spiritual knowledge makes a man really rich man and not the radio set or the motorcar etc.

Back in the 1930s the Nehru family had bought their medicines from Abhay's Prayag Pharmacy, and Abhay now appealed to Pandit Nehru as an old friend from Allahabad. Just as Abhay had requested Mahatma Gandhi, he requested Nehru to leave his political responsibilities "and as a popular gentleman of the world, engage the rest of your life in this organised spiritual movement to make a real adjustment of western material science combined with Indian way of spiritual realisation." As with his letter to Gandhi, his letter to Nehru went unanswered.

Among Abhay's former Bombay contacts was Mr. Harbanslal, a landlord who had once assured Abhay that he would provide him lodging whenever he needed. In the summer of 1958 Abhay went to call on Mr. Harbanslal, only to find that he had gone to the West. When Abhay learned that Mr. Harbanslal was traveling not only on business but on a cultural mission, his imagination seized on the idea of an Indian on a cultural mission in the West. He wrote to Mr. Harbanslal, asking for a place to stay, but also presenting his own cultural mission. Abhay knew that many Westerners

respected Indian culture. He had heard from his German Godbrother that although Indians who went to the West, especially to Germany, were well received, they were sometimes tested on their knowledge of Indian culture. So Abhay advised Mr. Harbanslal to teach the real conclusion of Indian culture as he traveled.

I think that people need this Indian message in this hour of necessity when the atomic bomb is hovering over the head of the human society.

...Please therefore begin the activities for the benefit of all people in the foreign countries since you have gone there.

Clearly, Abhay would have liked to have gone himself.

Abhay also reminded Mr. Harbanslal of his promise to provide him with an apartment: "...I am passing my days in Bombay in great inconvenience for want of a suitable residential place." But the letter never caught up with the touring Mr. Harbanslal.

Wanting to go to the West as soon as possible, Abhay visited one of his Godbrothers in Bombay, Kṛpāsindhu, and asked him to help.

Kṛpāsindhu: He came to my house and asked me to help him in going to America. He gave me some Back to Godheads which he said I could show to people to ask for help on his behalf. I tried to do something in this regard. I introduced Abhay Bābū to one man, a big industrialist, Hemraj Khandelwala. I went also. The three of us sat down, and I told the man how Abhay wanted to go to the West and how he was a good devotee and was writing and doing so many things. But somehow or other the man did not help.

Kṛpāsindhu told Abhay of how the Gaudiya Math in Bombay had sometimes been assisted by a pious business magnate, Mrs. Sumati Morarji, head of Scindia Steamship Lines. Abhay tried to see her but was unable. He did, however, see one of Mrs. Morarji's employees, a deputy manager for the Scindia Company, who heard him out and, to Abhay's surprise, responded generously. Considering Abhay a genuine sādhu, the Scindia agent offered him a fifty-percent concession on a voyage from India to the United States. He even put it in writing. Abhay immediately began arranging for his passport and visa. But he could not raise even the half fare.

Back in 1956 in Delhi he had been struggling and homeless. And now, as he considered his last two years of traveling out of Vṛndāvana, he felt that his position hadn't really improved; perhaps Kṛṣṇa didn't want him to succeed in this way. But one positive thing he had gained: determination to go to the West and preach. There he would surely meet with success.

* * *

Alone and poor, Abhay returned to Vṛndāvana. He was sixty-two, but he wasn't thinking of retiring. More than ever, his mood was reflective and renounced. Because few people knew him and because he wanted to write, he kept to himself.

He enjoyed deep peace as a resident of Vṛndāvana. Outside his window, the sacred Yamunā flowed by in a peaceful panorama for his private audience. The Keśi-ghāṭa neighborhood was quiet, though in the predawn he could hear a few devotees bathing and chanting. When the moon was full, the river seemed like a coolly resplendent jewel. And in the morning the sun would appear, like a red smudge, a fire burning through an opaque wall, at last bursting forth and clearing the entire sky, until in the hot blaze of noon, while the room would be in shadows, Abhay could see from his window a shimmering sun high in the sky and glittering across the silver sheet of the gentle river. Without so much as leaving his room, from his doorway he could see hundreds of temples clustered together for miles in the friendly town of Vṛndāvana. The various punctual kīrtanas and bell-rings in the temples, the spontaneous songs to Lord Kṛṣṇa in numerous homes and in the streets rose and filled the air with devotion.

On the veranda Abhay could chant japa, and there would be no interruption. He enjoyed a simple, almost carefree life of minimized physical wants—a few hours of rest at night, a little prasādam at noon, the simplest clothing. And he did not have to flatter anyone, support anyone, or manage anyone's life. His mind and intelligence were free and dwelt constantly on his service to his spiritual master. He saw his present circumstances as a preparation for a greater task before him. Despite his advanced age, he felt that he had barely begun his work. Yet he felt confident. He had his vision of a world association of devotees. It was not an idle dream, although he was not certain how it would all come about. But he knew his duty. For the present he would go on describing his vision, the vision of his predecessor spiritual masters, in articles and books. But as soon as possible he should go to the West. Westerners, he had concluded, were not satisfied with a materially comfortable life devoid of spiritual understanding; more than his fellow Indians, they would be open to the message of the Absolute Truth. He knew he should go. And he would go—if Kṛṣṇa desired.

Abhay lived frugally in Vṛndāvana, keeping exact account of every expenditure and every receipt. He carefully kept a ledger, just as if he were running a substantial business, even though his purchases were only a little milk, a few vegetables, charcoal for cooking, bus rides, and his major expenditure, postage.

* * *

Abhay composed a Bengali poem, "Vṛndāvana-bhajana." Its opening stanzas were especially self-reflective and personal.

1

I am sitting alone in Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

In this mood I am getting many realizations.

I have my wife, sons, daughters, grandsons, everything,

But I have no money, so they are a fruitless glory.

Kṛṣṇa has shown me the naked form of material nature;

By His strength it has all become tasteless to me today.

Yasyāham anugṛhṇāmi hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ:

"I gradually take away all the wealth of those upon whom I am merciful." How was I able to understand this mercy of the all-merciful?

2

Everyone has abandoned me, seeing me penniless—

Wife, relatives, friends, brothers, everyone.

This is misery, but it gives me a laugh. I sit alone and laugh.

In this māyā-saṁsāra, whom do I really love?

Where have my loving father and mother gone now?

And where are all my elders, who were my own folk?

Who will give me news of them, tell me who?

All that is left of this family life is a list of names.

3

As the froth on the seawater mixes again in the sea,

Māyā-saṁsāra's play is just like that.

No one is mother or father, or personal relative;

Just like the sea foam, they remain but a short time.

Just as the froth on seawater mixes again in the sea,

The body made of five elements meets with destruction.

How many bodies does the embodied soul take in this way?

His relatives are all related merely to the temporal body.

4

But everyone is your relative, brother, on the spiritual platform.

This relationship is not tinged with the smell of Māyā.

The Supreme Lord is the soul of everyone.

In relation to Him, everyone in the universe is the same.

All your relatives, brother! All the billions of jīvas.

When seen in relation to Kṛṣṇa they are all in harmony.

Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the jīva desires sense gratification,

And as a result he is firmly grasped by Māyā...

* * *

On an October visit to Delhi, Abhay received a donation from Kaviraj Baidya Nath Sircar, to be used for printing one thousand copies of Back to Godhead. Abhay promptly produced an October 20 issue of Back to Godhead with the donor's name on the front page. It was the first issue in two years. Another donor, Mr. Subodh Kumar Kapoor of Ramalal Kapoor and Sons, followed Mr. Sircar's example and donated one thousand copies for the November 20 issue.

The front-page article in the November issue was "Truth and Beauty." An editorial in The Times of India, speculating on whether truth and beauty were compatible, had opined that truth was not always beautiful but often ugly and unpleasant. Abhay disagreed: "Truth is so beautiful that many sages, saints, and devotees have left everything for the sake of Truth... but we are habituated to love untruth from time immemorial in the name of truth." Abhay agreed, however, that mundane truth and beauty were incompatible. Not only was mundane truth not beautiful; it was not truth. And mundane beauty was not real beauty. To explain, Abhay told a story.

Once a man fell in love with a beautiful girl, who tried to resist the man's advances. When he persisted, she requested that he wait for seven days, after which she would accept him. During the next seven days, the girl took a strong purgative and laxative and repeatedly passed stool and vomited. She stored the refuse in buckets. Thus "the so-called beautiful girl became lean, thin like a skeleton and turned blackish in complexion and the beautiful eye balls were pushed into the sockets of the skull."

The man appeared on the scene well dressed and well behaved and asked the waiting girl, who was depressed in appearance, about the beautiful girl who called him there. The man could not recognise the waiting girl as the same beautiful girl whom he was asking for. The same girl however was in a pitiable condition and the foolish man in spite of repeated assertion could not recognise her. It was all due to the action of the medicine only.

At last the girl told the powerful man all the story of her beauty and told him that she had separated the ingredients of her beauty and stored them up in the reservoirs. She also told him that he could enjoy the juices of beauty stored up in the reservoirs. The mundane poetic or the lunatic man agreed to see the juices of beauty and thus he was directed to the store of loose stool and liquid vomit which were emanating unbearable bad smell and thus the whole story of beauty liquid was disclosed to him.

Abhay went on to assert that literature which did not describe the ultimate truth and beauty of the Supreme Person was no better than stool and vomit, even though it be presented as poetry and philosophy.

In "Standard Morality," Abhay explained, "Morality is the standard of activity by which the Supreme Authority is satisfied." The scriptures contain moral codes prohibiting unholy sex relations, animal slaughter, intoxication, and gambling. Abhay attributed Mahatma Gandhi's success as a public leader to his observance of these moral principles. Abhay also praised the Vedic system of marriage: "after the attainment of puberty a woman wants a male, and if she is not married within that time and allowed to mix up with boys,... it is quite natural that there is every chance of fall down either by the boy or the girl." Despite changing social conditions, Abhay argued, "You cannot indulge in unholy connection with the opposite sex [just] because the social conditions have changed. Because unholy connection with woman is the beginning of all immorality."

In "Scholars Deluded," Abhay presented a critical review of Dr. Radhakrishnan's edition of Bhagavad-gītā, citing specifically the thirty-fourth verse of the Ninth Chapter, wherein Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that one should always think of Him and become His devotee. Dr. Radhakrishnan had commented, "It is not the personal Krishna to whom we have to give ourselves up utterly, but the unborn, beginningless eternal who speaks through Krishna." Although the obvious meaning of Bhagavad-gītā was that one should surrender to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Person, impersonalists like Dr. Radhakrishnan obscured the direct meaning with their word jugglery.

* * *

On the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Abhay keenly felt separation from his spiritual master. He perfectly understood that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's instructions were more important than his physical presence and that, in fact, the spiritual master was present within his instructions; in this way, Abhay had always been with his spiritual master. Yet on this annual day, Abhay could not help feeling loss. He remembered how in 1932 he had been a gr̥hastha and a new disciple. At that time he had not been free to do as much service as now. Yet it had been in those years that he had been able to see his spiritual master, offer obeisances before him, eat the remnants of his prasādam, walk beside him, hear his voice, receive his personal glance. Abhay thought of their meetings together.

How powerful had been Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's mission! His presses had been running day and night, printing magazines, books, the daily Nadiyā Prakāśa. And Europe had been a promising new preaching field. With Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura at the helm, the Gaudiya Math had entered into battle against māyā's forces, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had made all his disciples

unafraid. Abhay had always been eager to serve his spiritual master, to serve within the Gaudiya Math with its headquarters in Calcutta. But exactly how he would serve had never been clear to him until his last letter from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

Abhay looked back on the more than twenty years since his spiritual master's disappearance. The Gaudiya Math had been undone by its leaders, and everyone else had scattered like leaves in a storm. It was an unspeakable loss. And it was an old story—how the big sannyāsīs had disregarded their spiritual master's instructions and had intrigued, disputed, litigated. Violent party factions, false leaders claiming to be world ācārya—and which party had been right? No, both had been wrong, all wrong, because the Gaudiya Math had disintegrated. Now there were dozens of little maṭhas and no preaching, no real preaching as before, when he, Sīṃha-guru, had cast fear into the Māyāvādīs, had led an army of young, powerful preachers to march throughout India and the world. And the greatest sufferers of the Gaudiya Math's dissolution were the people, the nondevotees, who had little hope of being delivered from the batterings of māyā. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had begun a spiritual revolution, but that revolution had now been overthrown by māyā. The scattered particles of the Gaudiya Math had settled quietly into self-satisfied, insular, almost impotent units. And it was the people in general who suffered.

Abhay groped after memories of his spiritual master. He felt secure in that his own relationship with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was intact, continuing. Yet he felt helpless. He was diligently pursuing his spiritual master's order to preach in English, yet without his spiritual master's physical presence he felt small and very much alone. At times like this, he questioned the wisdom of having left his family and business.

Lamenting Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's absence and the fall of the Gaudiya Math, he composed a Bengali poem, “Viraha-aṣṭaka.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are always compassionate towards the suffering jīva souls.

On this occasion of your separation, I see only dejection.

An unlimited ocean of mercy, cutting an illusion,

Nityānanda distributed an ocean of flood of love of God.

The jāti-gosāi stopped the stream,

But coming yourself, Lord, you revealed this illusion.

So once again everyone was immersed in the flood of love,

Even one so fallen, insignificant, and sinful as I.

On the strength of Lord Caitanya's order

You sent all of your servants door to door as gurus.

There was preaching everywhere, from the sea to the Himalayas.

Now, in your absence, everything is darkness.

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are always compassionate towards the suffering
jīva souls.

On this occasion of your separation, I see only dejection.

In the same way that Advaita Prabhu brought Lord Gaura,
so did Bhaktivinoda pray.

His enthusiasm brought you; on the strength of his enthusiasm you came

And made everyone understand that India is a holy land.

One who takes his birth in the land of Bhārata

Must make his life perfect and then preach to others.

This mahā-mantra message you preached everywhere.

Now in your absence, Lord, everything is darkness.

Your ocean of compassion has again been stopped.

This spear of great misery has cut through my heart.

Without Lord Caitanya's message, there is just confusion.

Seeing this, all the Vaiṣṇavas feel pangs of separation.

The conditioned souls are all in darkness once again.

They are searching for peace, but are dying in an ocean of anxiety.

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are always compassionate towards the suffering jīva souls.

On this occasion of your separation, I see only dejection...

Abhay's was a dark view. The golden era of preaching that had flourished in the days of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was no longer. "By the influence of māyā," Abhay wrote, "now everything is darkness... All devotional instructions have been destroyed... now everything has

been reversed." Meditating on that great personality possessed of the divine power to save the entire world, Abhay expressed his feelings of weakness and helplessness: "Because of those not fixed in devotional service, many branches have spread all over... Your conclusive message did not touch the ear / Where will I get the strength for the saṅkīrtana movement?" How could he, a tiny spiritual child, survive without his spiritual father? Now who could save the world, which was so much more oppressed than ever before?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had said that a dead man could not preach; only one with life could preach. As long as Abhay and others could deeply regret the Gaudiya Math's failure, there was still life and still hope: "If everyone obtained this right and went out and made disciples, / Then the suffering souls in the world could be saved." It was useless to cry over what his Godbrothers had done, yet in seeing and resenting it, Abhay found, within the pain of what might have been, a continuing spark of what still might be.

Abhay sent this poem and "Vṛndāvana-bhajana" to Keśava Mahārāja, who published them in the Gauḍīya Patrikā.

* * *

One night Abhay had a striking dream, the same dream he had had several times before, during his days as a householder. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared, just as Abhay had known him, the tall, scholarly sannyāsī, coming directly from the spiritual world, from Kṛṣṇa's personal entourage. He called to Abhay and indicated that he should follow. Repeatedly he called and motioned. He was asking Abhay to take sannyāsa. Come, he urged, become a sannyāsī.

Abhay awoke in a state of wonder. He thought of this instruction as another feature of the original instruction Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had given him at their first meeting in Calcutta, the same instruction that his spiritual master had later solidified in a letter: become an English preacher and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the Western world. Sannyāsa was for that end; otherwise, why would his spiritual master have asked him to accept it? Abhay reasoned that his spiritual master was saying, "Now take sannyāsa and you will actually be able to accomplish this mission. Formerly the time was not right."

Abhay deliberated cautiously. By accepting sannyāsa, a Vaiṣṇava dedicates his body, mind, and words totally to the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, renouncing all other engagements. He was doing that already. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had offered sannyāsa to his leading disciples so that they could continue his mission; they hadn't done it. Preaching in the West had proved perilous even for the Gaudiya Math's most recognized sannyāsīs. How could he, a mere householder, presume he could succeed where the others had failed? He was hesitant. The helpless, incapable feeling he had expressed in his "Viraha-aṣṭaka" was there. But now his spiritual master was beckoning him—over all other considerations, even over natural humility. Now, although he was elderly and alone, the desire to preach just as his spiritual master had preached remained within him, a fierce though sometimes quietly expressed determination.

The Vedic standard and the example set by the previous ācāryas was that if one wanted to lead a preaching movement, sannyāsa was required. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had taken sannyāsa to facilitate

his missionary work. Lord Caitanya had taken sannyāsa to further the saṅkīrtana movement. Of course, Lord Caitanya was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but when His young students had been disrespectful towards Him, treating Him as an ordinary man, He had taken sannyāsa. Because a sannyāsī is automatically respected, Lord Caitanya's acceptance of sannyāsa was a calculated tactic; as soon as He began traveling throughout India as a sannyāsī, He immediately attracted thousands of followers to the saṅkīrtana movement.

Knowing that many cheaters would accept the saffron dress and abuse the respect given to sannyāsīs, Lord Caitanya had advised against accepting sannyāsa in the Age of Kali. He knew that cheaters, in the guise of sādhus, would act immorally, accumulate funds for their own sense gratification, and make many followers simply to enhance their own prestige. Posing as swamis, they would cheat the public. Because the people in Kali-yuga are unable to follow the rules and regulations of sannyāsa, Lord Caitanya had recommended that they simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. However, if a person could actually follow the rules, and especially if he had to spread the saṅkīrtana movement, sannyāsa was necessary.

Abhay first had to approach one of his Godbrothers for permission. He decided to turn to Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja (formerly Kuṅja vihārī), the leader of the Caitanya Math in Calcutta. Abhay still thought of the Caitanya Math as the headquarters of his spiritual master's mission. During the heated legal disputes, the Caitanya Math had been the most prized acquisition, and since 1948 it had been under the legal ownership of Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja. Now, although each sannyāsī had his own place or places, the Caitanya Math and Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja legally represented the Gaudiya Math entity. Abhay felt that if he were to take sannyāsa and go preach in America, he should give the Caitanya Math the first opportunity to support his work. In April 1959, Abhay wrote to Tīrtha Mahārāja, inquiring about sannyāsa as well as about the Caitanya Math's printing some of his manuscripts. And since no one was going abroad, he volunteered to do so on behalf of the Caitanya Math.

Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja replied that Abhay should first join the Caitanya Math. He mentioned the strife that still lingered: "Those who are acting against Caitanya Math, they are motivated by their individual ambitions." Anyone who was against the Caitanya Math, he said, was acting illogically and against the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. So according to Tīrtha Mahārāja, the thing for Abhay to do, the thing he had neglected to do for so many years, was to join the Caitanya Math and act under his direction. Tīrtha Mahārāja mentioned several members of the Caitanya Math who had recently accepted the sannyāsa order, and he said that Abhay could also become one—in time. He invited Abhay to come reside at the Caitanya Math: "The houses that we have, there are rooms that are airy and well lit. We will treat you exclusively. There won't be any difficulty. We will take care that no inconveniences are caused." But as for printing books:

We are eagerly awaiting to print the books like Satsandarbhā, Vedānta, based on devotional service, and many other rare books by the goswamis. First we will print them. Books written by you will be checked by the editorial staff, and if the funds can be raised, then they can be printed according to priority. The books will be printed only if they are favorable for the service of the Caitanya Math. Therefore, if the fund is raised, then there is a plan to go abroad as well.

Abhay was not encouraged. The main difficulty, he felt, was the Caitanya Math's shortage of funds.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I was working with my broken typewriter. I went to our Tīrtha Mahārāja: "You give me a room and print my books. Give me some money. I will join you." I had thought, "This is Guru Mahārāja's institution." He did not say no, but the printing of books was a difficult task for him. He had no money. He was hardly collecting for maintaining. Printing of books is a big job, and there is no guarantee of sale.

Without printing books and going to the West, sannyāsa did not have meaning for Abhay. And who knew when Tīrtha Mahārāja would sanction his taking sannyāsa? There was no point in going to Calcutta just to reside in an airy, well-lit room; that he had already in Vṛndāvana. Abhay wrote back to Tīrtha Mahārāja, mentioning his direct order from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī to preach to the English-speaking people. He wanted to go to the West right away, and he had thought the Caitanya Math would welcome his offer. Both Abhay and Tīrtha Mahārāja had their responsibilities, but perhaps they could work together to carry out the desire of their spiritual master. Abhay asked Tīrtha Mahārāja to reconsider. On May 7, 1959, Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja wrote back.

My suggestion is don't make any hasty decisions. For the time being you stay with us and engage yourself in the service of the society and then accept tridanda [sannyāsa]. The purpose of accepting tridanda is to serve the society.

If that is your desire then Sri Caitanya Math will decide about your going to America to preach and make all the arrangements. It can never be the principle of the society to let one act according to his individual attempt or desire. The society will decide after consulting with the heads what is to be done by whom. This is what I want to say. First of all, it is necessary to identify oneself with the society.

In order to preach in America or in other foreign countries, it is important to have a dignified organization in the background and secondly it is necessary to establish one's self in India before going to preach in the foreign countries.

Now it is that there are no conferences or meetings in the West as before. Communication is done through the media of television.

Abhay could understand the needs and priorities of the Caitanya Math, but he could not allow them to overrule what he considered the highest mandate: preaching as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had ordered. Abhay had offered his services to the leaders of the Caitanya Math, thinking they might also see things his way. He thought that with the world's crying need for Kṛṣṇa consciousness staring them in the face, they might see that this Abhay Bābū was convinced and enthusiastic and so should be sent right away with whatever he required. But they had other priorities.

Abhay next turned to Keśava Mahārāja in Mathurā, and Keśava Mahārāja told Abhay to take sannyāsa immediately. After corresponding with Tīrtha Mahārāja, Abhay had felt some uncertainty about accepting sannyāsa, and now that he was being encouraged so strongly, he resisted. But Keśava Mahārāja was insistent.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I was sitting alone in Vṛndāvana, writing. My God brother insisted to me, "Bhaktivedanta Prabhu, you must do it. Without accepting the renounced order of life, nobody can become a preacher." So he insisted. Not he insisted; practically my spiritual master insisted. He wanted me to become a preacher, so he forced me through this God brother: "You accept." So, unwillingly I accepted.

* * *

Keśavajī Gaudiya Math was located in the midst of one of Mathurā's downtown bazaars. Its main entrance, an arched doorway, led into a courtyard, open to the sky through a metal grating above. The architecture was similar to that of the Vamśī-gopālajī temple. The atmosphere was secluded, as in a monastery. Abhay was a familiar, welcomed figure here. He had lived here, written and studied in the library here, edited the Gauḍīya Patrikā, and donated the Deity of Lord Caitanya who stood on the altar beside the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (Śrī Śrī Rādhā Vinodavihārījī). But his visit during September of 1959 was not an ordinary one. He entered the maṭha dressed in white, Abhay Bābū, but he would soon be leaving dressed in saffron, a swami.

Abhay had been living as a renunciant for nine years; there was no need for him to observe a ceremony or to proclaim himself a sādhu by changing to saffron dress. But it was the paramparā system that a man take tridaṇḍi-sannyāsa at the end of his life. He was aware of the cheating sannyāsīs; even in Vṛndāvana he had seen so-called sādhus who did not preach but simply spent their days hunting for capātīs. Some "swamis" of Vṛndāvana even indulged illicitly in what they had supposedly come here to reject: sex life. Such persons were making a mockery of sannyāsa. And there were the caste gosvāmīs also, who lived like ordinary householders, running temples as a business to support their families and accepting honor and donations from the public on the false basis of birth. Abhay knew of these abuses of sannyāsa, but he also knew the real purpose of sannyāsa. Sannyāsa was for preaching.

On the morning of September 17, 1959, in the fifty-by-twenty-five-foot Deity room on the second floor of the Keśavajī Math, a group of devotees sat before the Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. The Deities were colorfully dressed in royal clothing and silver crowns. Rādhārāṇī's right hand faced palm-forward in benediction for the worshiper; at Her side, Her left hand held a flower for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa stood like a dancer, placing His right leg in a casual tiptoe pose before His left, playing His long silver flute, which He held gracefully to His red lips. His long black hair reached down past His shoulders, and the garland of marigolds around His neck reached down to His knees. On His right stood the Deity of Lord Caitanya, His right arm raised, left arm at His side, His body straight, feet together. He was a soft golden color, and He had large eyes, a well-formed red mouth, and straight black hair down to His shoulders. One level below the Deities were pictures of the spiritual masters in disciplic succession: Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Bhakti prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja.

Abhay sat on a mat of kuśa grass beside ninety-year-old Sanātana, also to receive sannyāsa that day. Sitting opposite the two candidates, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, Keśava Mahārāja's disciple, prepared to conduct the ceremony of mantras and offerings of grains and ghee into the fire. Akiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī, Abhay's Godbrother, known for sweet singing, played mṛdaṅga and sang

Vaiṣṇava bhajanas. Sitting on a raised āsana, His Holiness Keśava Mahārāja presided. Since there had been no notices or invitations, only the maṭha's few residents attended.

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja chanted the required mantras and then sat back silently while Keśava Mahārāja lectured. Then, to everyone's surprise, Keśava Mahārāja asked Abhay to speak. Abhay had not expected this. As he looked around at the gathering of devotees, he understood that the common language was Hindi; only Keśava Mahārāja and a few others spoke English. Yet he knew he must speak in English.

After Abhay's speech, each initiate received his sannyāsa-daṇḍa, the traditional head-high staff made of four bamboo rods bound together and completely enwrapped in saffron cloth. They were given their sannyāsa garments: one piece of saffron cloth for a dhotī, one for a top piece, and two strips for underwear. They also received tulasī neck beads and the sannyāsa-mantra. Keśava Mahārāja said that Abhay would now be known as Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja and that Sanātana would be Muni Mahārāja. After the ceremony, the two new sannyāsīs posed for a photo, standing on either side of their sannyāsa-guru, who sat in a chair.

Keśava Mahārāja didn't impose any strictures on Abhay; he simply encouraged him to go on preaching. Yet Abhay knew that to become A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami did not mean merely that he was giving up family, home comforts, and business. That he had done five years ago. Changing from white cloth to saffron cloth, from Abhay Bābū to Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja, had a special significance: it was the mandate he had required, the irrevocable commitment. Now it was only a matter of time before Bhaktivedanta Swami would travel to the West as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had ordained. This was Bhaktivedanta Swami's realization of his new sannyāsa status.

The Gauḍīya Patrikā's account of the sannyāsa initiation included a biographical sketch of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja, listing the major events of his life. The article concluded:

Seeing his enthusiasm and ability to write articles in Hindi, English, and Bengali, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja gave him the instruction to take tridaṇḍi-sannyāsa. For nearly one year he had been ready to accept sannyāsa. In the month of Bhādra, on the day on which Viśvarūpa accepted sannyāsa, Bhaktivedanta Swami at the Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Math accepted sannyāsa from the founder of the Vedānta Samiti, Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Mahārāja. Seeing him accept his āśrama of renunciation, seeing this pastime for accepting the renounced order of life, we have attained great affection and enthusiasm.

SPL 10: "This Momentous Hour of Need"

CHAPTER TEN

"This Momentous Hour of Need"

Our capacity of presenting the matter in adequate language, specially a foreign language, will certainly fail and there may be so many literary discrepancies inspite of our honest attempt to present it in the proper way. But we are sure that with our all faults in this connection the seriousness of the subject matter will be taken into consideration and the leaders of the society will

still accept this on account of its being an honest attempt for glorifying the Almighty Great so much now badly needed.

—From Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,

Canto 1, Vol. 1

Bhaktivedanta Swami, accompanied by some of the Keśavajī Math's devotees, made a short preaching tour of Agra, Kanpur, Jhansi, and Delhi. But he was soon back in his own place at the Vamśī-gopālajī temple. No one called him Abhay Bābū any longer; even amongst friends it was Swamiji or Mahārāja. And people often addressed him as Swami Bhaktivedantajī, Swami Mahārāja, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. People readily recognized him as a sādhu and offered respect. Yet his basic problems remained. He wanted to write and print, but he had no money. He wanted to broadcast the message of Godhead, but few were willing to listen. Such things hadn't been changed by his becoming a swami.

When a librarian advised Bhaktivedanta Swami to write books (they were permanent, whereas newspapers were read once and thrown away), he took it that his spiritual master was speaking through this person. Then an Indian Army officer who liked Back to Godhead suggested the same thing. Bhaktivedanta Swami took it as a revelation from his spiritual master. As a dependent servant constantly meditating on the desires of his transcendental master and seeking his guidance, Bhaktivedanta Swami felt his spiritual master's reciprocal blessings and personal presence. More and more he was feeling confidential contact with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, and now he was feeling an inspiration to write books.

He considered Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, because it was the most important and authoritative Vaiṣṇava scripture. Although Bhagavad-gītā was the essence of all Vedic knowledge, presented in a brief ABC fashion, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was elaborate. And Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had both written Bengali commentaries on the Bhāgavatam. In fact, most of the great Vaiṣṇava ācāryas of the past had commented on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Lord Caitanya Himself had recommended Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam as the spotless Vedic literature. An English translation and commentary for this book could one day change the hearts of the entire world. And if he could publish even a few books, his preaching would be enhanced; he could go abroad with confidence and not appear empty-handed.

One day Gauracand Gosvāmī, proprietor of the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, approached Bhaktivedanta Swami, inviting him to come live at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple; being the eternal home of Jīva Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī, it would be more suitable for his writing and translating. Bhaktivedanta Swami was interested. He had never stopped his regular visits there, and he always felt inspired in the presence of the samādhi tombs of the great leaders of Lord Caitanya's movement, Jīva Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī. But when he went to look at the two available rooms, he found them in poor repair; they had not been maintained or lived in for many years. Not wanting to miss the opportunity, however, Bhaktivedanta Swami agreed to take the rooms, at five rupees per month. He estimated that for a little more than five hundred rupees he could have electricity installed and extensive repairs made; and when it was finished he could move in.

Bhaktivedanta Swami saw the invitation as auspicious, and living there would complement his new project of presenting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in English. Of all Vṛndāvana's temples, Rādhā-Dāmodara had the largest collection of original writings by the six Gosvāmīs and their followers—more than two thousand separate manuscripts, many of them three hundred, some even four hundred years old. Bhaktivedanta Swami looked forward to residing there some day and serving in the company of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. For now he would remain at the Vaiṣṇī-gopālajī temple, and with whatever money he could collect he would gradually repair the rooms.

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It was an important maxim of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's that a preacher should go to the cities and not remain in the seclusion of a holy place. So in that spirit, Bhaktivedanta Swami continued commuting to Delhi, even though to him it was a hell and even though he had no fixed residence there. Often he was taken in by businessmen who felt obliged on the basis of Indian culture: a good man, if he wanted to be favored by God, should accommodate the sādhus and give them meals and a place to stay. But the vision of such pious men was a sentimental Hinduism, and their receptions were artificial; they could not really appreciate Bhaktivedanta Swami's work. And Bhaktivedanta Swami was not of a mind to impose himself upon such hosts.

Then he spoke with Mr. Hitsaran Sharma, manager of the Radha Press. In the past Mr. Sharma had printed flyers and stationery for the League of Devotees, and Bhaktivedanta Swami had stayed in Mr. Sharma's house on occasion. Mr. Sharma introduced Bhaktivedanta Swami to Pandit Sri Krishna Sharma, a caste brāhmaṇa and active religionist, secretary to the century-old Delhi religious society Sri Naval Prem Sabha. Out of sympathy for Bhaktivedanta Swami's literary labors, Krishna Pandit gave him a room in his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in the Chippiwada neighborhood of Old Delhi. Now Bhaktivedanta Swami would have a permanent office in Delhi.

The train from Mathurā would arrive at the Old Delhi station near Chandni Chowk, the broad avenue down which poured a river of workday traffic: rickshas, bicycle riders sometimes a dozen abreast, autos in lesser numbers, men running on foot pulling heavy carts, and beasts of burden—donkeys, oxen, an occasional camel or elephant, carrying heavy loads and being driven by men with whips in their hands.

From the intensely busy Chandni Chowk, Bhaktivedanta Swami would take the short walk to Chippiwada, past the Red Fort, keeping the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple on his left, then proceeding along a side street past the large, imposing Jama Mosque. Near Chippiwada the streets would become narrow. Chippiwada had been a Muslim neighborhood until the India-Pakistan partition of 1947, when thousands of Punjabi Hindus had settled there. Chippiwada was part of a mixed Hindu-Muslim neighborhood so crowded with people that cars were not allowed to enter the streets; only oxcarts and rickshas could penetrate the narrow, crowded lanes, and in some areas the lanes were planted with iron posts to keep rickshas out. Even a bicycle rider would create havoc amongst the densely packed crowds of shoppers and workers who moved along the streets and lanes. Side streets led to other side streets—lanes so narrow that the second-floor balconies on opposite sides of the street were only inches apart, practically forming a roof over the street, so that a pedestrian could glimpse only the narrowest patch of sky. Private yards, shops, and alleys became almost indistinguishable from the public thoroughfares. Although most shops bore signs in Hindi

with subheadings in English, some bore the curvy scripts of Arabic, and women dressed in black with veiled faces were a common sight. In the heart of this intense city life was the narrow entrance of Krishna Pandit's Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple, with a plaque of the demigod Gaṇeśa and a row of nesting pigeons just above its simple arched door.

The temple, with its resident families, retained some of the tenement atmosphere of the neighborhood. Although the temple room was dark, the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on the altar were well illuminated. Rādhārāṇī was the color of cream, and Kṛṣṇa was black marble and stood about two feet tall. He was decorated with dots of fresh sandalwood pulp and a mask of yellow sandalwood on His forehead. Both Deities were dressed in silk garments. On the second floor, just above the Deity room, was a guest room, Bhaktivedanta Swami's room. Its cement walls and floor were completely bare. Protruding up from the floor was a three-foot high concrete pyramid with a spire, indicating that the Deities were directly beneath.

Bhaktivedanta Swami soon found that his room was not secluded but was side by side with other residential rooms. Outside the door, a metal grating smaller than in the Varṇāsī-gopālajī temple and Keśavajī Math revealed the small temple courtyard below. From the roof, hardly a single tree could be seen. The view was of tenement rooftops so tightly crowded together that it seemed one could walk from roof to roof all the way to the colossal Jama Masjid. The mosque's three large domes, surrounded by taller minarets, rose high above the ordinary buildings, attracting flocks of pigeons, which perched upon the domes or flew in wheeling patterns in the sky.

Krishna Pandit dressed in a black, lightweight cotton coat, the kind made internationally recognizable by Pandit Nehru, and he had the Nehru hat also. He spoke good English and was garrulous. He was well known and respected within the neighborhood. He saw Bhaktivedanta Swami as God-sent—a sādhu for him to take care of and thus prove once again the piety of Hindu culture. He found his new guest likable: a simple, gentle, gracious, and accomplished Vaiṣṇava scholar.

Krishna Pandit said he understood the importance of Bhaktivedanta Swami's sanātana-dharma mission and his need for a Delhi office, and he vowed to supply his guest with whatever he required. Although Bhaktivedanta Swami was reluctant to ask for anything for himself, Krishna Pandit brought in a sitting mat and a low table, placing them before the pyramid, and he also brought a mattress. He showed Bhaktivedanta Swami how to operate the room's single light, a bulb and metal shade that hung from a cord and could be raised or lowered by hand. He brought a picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that had been given to his guru by the Mahārāja of Jaipur and set it within a niche in the wall, relishing that Bhaktivedanta Swami could gaze upon it with the eyes of a true devotee.

Bhaktivedanta Swami had wanted a secure place for writing books before going to the West, and Lord Kṛṣṇa had provided it. Now he could work either in Vṛndāvana or in Delhi. Almost immediately he began Back to Godhead again, serializing book excerpts from his previous manuscripts, while at the same time beginning Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

When Krishna Pandit learned of his guest's lone struggles to produce Back to Godhead, he volunteered to help with some of the business aspects of the publication. Bhaktivedanta Swami was indeed gratified by Krishna Pandit's sincere help, and in appreciation he gave him an addition to his name: Hari-bhaktānudāsa, "one who serves the Lord's devotee." After six months in Chippiwada, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote an appreciation in the temple's guest book.

I am pleased to write herein that I have come to Delhi from my H.Q. 1/859, Keshi Ghat, Vrindaban (U.P.) purely on spiritual mission to propagate the cult of devotional service of the Lord. And I am more pleased to mention herewith that Śrīmān Sri Krishna Sharma, Haribhaktanudas, has provided me a suitable room for my literary activities. I am publishing an English fortnightly magazine of the name "Back to Godhead" from this place and the Nawal Prem Shabha of which Sri Krishnaji is the Hony. Secretary is ar ranging for my daily lectures on Śrīmad Bhagwat.

Late Pandit Jyoti Prasad Sharma, father of Shri Krishnaji, was also known to me, and during his lifetime whenever I used to come to Delhi, Late Pandit Jyoti Prasadji would provide me with residential place. His good son is also following in the footprints of his noble father, and as secretary of the Nawal Prem Shabha, he is doing good service in propagating Rama Nama all over the city.

In neat English script, Bhaktivedanta Swami went on to write that, in his opinion, temples should be used solely for educating the public in spiritual values and that it was his personal mission to organize temples for that service.

Temples are not meant for ordinary householders engaged simply in the matters of animal propensities. Those who are actually engaged in the service of the Lord Deity, the predominator of the temple, can only be allowed to remain in the temple, otherwise not.

Trying to compose Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam at Chippiwada while surrounded by sometimes noisy families with their nondevotional domestic habits had impressed upon him the importance of not using a temple as an apartment house.

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Despite his plans to settle down and begin the monumental task of translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhaktivedanta Swami was ready to preach in other ways also. In October of 1959 he had encountered a news article in The Times of India. Two American scientists had received the Nobel prize in physics for discovering the antiproton. "According to one of the fundamental assumptions of the new theory," the article read, "there may exist another world or an anti-world built up of anti-matter." The "other world" reminded Bhaktivedanta Swami of the eternal spiritual world described in Bhagavad-gītā. He was well aware that the scientists were not speaking of antimaterial in the sense of "eternal," or "spiritual" but he thought of using their scientific terms to capture the interest of scientific-minded people. He conceived of an essay presenting the theistic science of Bhagavad-gītā in terms of the antimaterial particle and the antimaterial world.

It was a time when the whole world was talking of space travel. Indian news media had reported the Russian Sputnik two years ago, and the race for space had begun. Seizing on the current interest

in space travel, Bhaktivedanta Swami described how by bhakti-yoga the soul can travel past the farthest reaches of space to the eternal planets of the spiritual world, where life is blissful and full of knowledge. He gave his own fresh translations of Bhagavad-gītā verses, couched in the language of the new physics, with its antimaterial particle and antimaterial world. The complete work, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, was a fifteen-thousand-word manuscript, and he showed it to Hitsaran Sharma of Radha Press. But he didn't have enough money to get the little book printed.

In February of 1960 Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to print it himself in two installments of *Back to Godhead*. The articles drew an immediate response from a physicist at the Gujarat University in Ahmedabad, Mr. Y. G. Naik, who received *Back to Godhead* through the mail. Dr. Naik thought Bhaktivedanta Swami's application of the antimaterial principle was "really a grand one... This is no doubt a classic essay..." Dr. Naik was interested in further discussion on physics and transcendental knowledge, and Bhaktivedanta Swami replied with equal enthusiasm, finally asking the physicist to join him in distributing the cultural heritage of India to the whole world.

Convinced that such an essay had great potential to interest educated English-speaking readers, Bhaktivedanta Swami worked hard to raise enough in donations to print *Easy Journey to Other Planets* as a paperback book. He finally did so in the fall of 1960. A foreword by Dr. N. K. Sidhanta, vice chancellor of the University of Delhi, arrived late but was included in the book as an insert.

While everyone may gain from it, the student community in particular is recommended to read the book with care and practice Bhaktiyoga, which will help to strengthen the mind and build up character. I shall be glad to see this work read by the students and the teachers alike...

Several Indian scientists and scholars contributed reviews, noting the book's "scientific cum spiritual vision" and "the method of speeding over space not by mechanical acceleration of speed, but through psychological effort and spiritual emancipation." It was only thirty-eight pages, but it was his first publication aside from the one-page folded newspaper, *Back to Godhead*. He tried to distribute the little book effectively. He gave one copy to Dr. P. Bannerji of the National Museum of New Delhi.

Dr. Bannerji: He used to come to the library and consult some books, and I met him there. He gave me a book called *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. He gave me some copies to distribute for a rupee or half a rupee each.

I felt attracted to him. I thought he was a saintly person with pure devotion and without any outward glamor. He was not out to attract people just for name and fame. He had little support from anybody. He was living alone in a small room in Chippiwada. He was devoted to his studies. So I asked him, "Sir, if you have time and you don't mind coming to my house, could you kindly come on Sundays and recite the Bhāgavata in my house? He readily agreed. He was a good scholar. He was learned in the scriptures, and he was fond of communicating his ideas to others. He was a good speaker and a good conversationalist. He was very polite.

Whatever he said he said very distinctly. He spoke in Bengali and explained the essence of the verses. Sometimes he also referred to the commentaries, just to give me more information. The others were not very much interested in commentary or in difficult aspects, but because he knew

that I had some studies in the field, he explained the commentaries for my sake and for the sake of one or two other gentlemen who were also very elderly and very scholarly.

The gatherings at my home would be attended by about twenty or thirty people, and he would continue his explanation for one or two hours. Then he would recite the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and we would also take part with the karatālas and harmonium. So it was a very enjoyable gathering, because he made the difficult things very easy and he explained everything to all of us according to our needs. He knew that this much is for this person, this much is intended for this man, this much for the others.

After the meetings, he used to take a little rest in my house. I requested him to take meals in my house, but he said he did not take meals prepared by others. But when he met my wife and she said she would be happy to prepare the meals, he said, "All right, I will take," and she used to prepare meals on Sundays when he would come.

He sometimes asked me how to get more and more people attracted towards this field. But as a government worker, I could not persuade anyone very openly. Nor had I the time to organize anything on a big scale for him. But he was not satisfied with that. He asked me if I could organize on a bigger scale. He knew that the people who attended the meetings at my house were very old—seventy, eighty, one was ninety years of age—retired, educated persons.

It lasted for no less than a year. After that, he said he would be trying to go out to other places. He asked me to continue the gatherings, but I said, "I am not initiated." He said I could continue anyway, because I was born as a brāhmaṇa. He gave me the authority to continue for some time. But I could not continue, because I used to go out. I lost all interest after he left. I was a government servant.

* * *

Easy Journey to Other Planets had been like a warm-up for his real work of presenting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. But now he was even more convinced of the need for books. To preach, he would have to have books—especially if he were to go to the West. With books he could create a spiritual revolution. There was so much literature in the West, but Westerners had nothing like this, nothing to fill their spiritual vacuum.

Although he wanted to give as much time as possible to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, he decided to continue with Back to Godhead by using excerpts from already existing book manuscripts as articles. Occasionally, however, he would write and print a new article. In "Relevant Inquiries" he wrote:

We are just trying to make an humble attempt to save the human being by propaganda of Back to Godhead. This propaganda is not fictitious. If there is any reality at all this propaganda of Back to Godhead is the beginning of that era-of-reality.

In "A Godless Civilization" Bhaktivedanta Swami referred to Prime Minister Nehru's complaints about the misuse of public funds in the name of religion. Bhaktivedanta Swami noted that although

there were undoubtedly instances in which religious leaders were implicated in criminal offenses, if statistics were compared the religious cheaters would be outnumbered by the political cheaters. Although Pandit Nehru had been right in warning of religious fraud, the warning could not be effective without a thorough reform of spiritual institutions, and that reform could be accomplished only with the cooperation of government leaders. Bhaktivedanta Swami quoted from his letter in which he had asked Prime Minister Nehru to take up the study of Bhagavad-gītā; but, as he informed his Back to Godhead readers, Pandit Nehru had never replied. "Because of his lack of spiritual knowledge... he thought that this institution [the League of Devotees] might be something like the so many mathas and temples which have become the source of headache for the Pandit."

Bhaktivedanta Swami charged that Pandit Nehru thought that any spiritual organization "is a dungeon for accumulating public funds and then misuse it for questionable purposes."

He, however, approves of the so-called Sadhus who do social service and talk nonsense in the spiritual science. This is so because he has no depth of spiritual knowledge for himself although he is Brahmin and Pandit. Ignorance in spiritual knowledge is the qualification of the Sudras or the labouring class.

He requested Pandit Nehru not to be afraid of the word God or Kṛṣṇa: "but we can assure him that there is no such cause of fear, because Krishna is everyone's friend and... able to render real help to everyone..." Bhaktivedanta Swami ended by suggesting that immoral practices were not confined only to the temples of India, but were common to materialistic civilizations all over the world. In particular he cited the disturbances amongst youth that were becoming rampant in the 1960s.

The best thing will be for the physician to heal himself first. Because in Godless civilisation, while the occupants of the Mathas and temples have been the cause of headache for the Pandit, the same thing under a different label has become the cause of headache for other European and Asian statesmen. The unbridled youngsters of those countries under the name of "Teddy Boys" in England, the "Rebels without Cause" in America, and the "Half Strong" in Germany, the "Leather Jackets" in Sweden, the "Children of the Sun" in Japan, and the "Style Boys" in U.S.S.R. are some of the by-products of a Godless Civilisation. And that is the root cause of all headache. That requires a thorough treatment.

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At Chippiwada, Bhaktivedanta Swami followed much the same daily schedule as at Keśi-ghāṭa, except that with Krishna Pandit doing some of the secretarial work for Back to Godhead, he was free to devote more hours to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Krishna Pandit: He used to translate Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam before dawn, about 3:00 A.M. In the beginning there was no typewriter, but then he arranged a portable typewriter. He would do his daily work and then cook his food himself. I arranged raw materials for his cooking. Sometimes he used to come to my family asking my wife to get some food. Sometimes he would also bathe at 5:00 or 6:00 in the afternoon.

Every day he was typing. And he himself was reading some Bhāgavatam. And he was going down in the temple for darśana. Then he was going outside, sometimes returning at 2:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon. Then he was typing and sending the proofs of Back to Godhead to a place and checking them. He was doing by hand all this type of work. His main activity was typing many hours a day.

Bhaktivedanta Swami worked from a Sanskrit and Bengali Bhāgavatam, edited by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and a large book containing the original commentaries of twelve great ācāryas. He had a standard format: he made a roman transliteration of the Sanskrit devanāgarī script, then word-for-word English synonyms, an English prose translation, and finally his English purport on that verse. Before writing his own purport, however, he would consult the commentaries of the ācāryas, especially Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Vijayadhvaja Tīrtha, and Śrīdhara Svāmī.

He contemplated the size of the project he was attempting. The Bhāgavatam contained eighteen thousand verses. The First Canto's seventeen chapters would fill three volumes of four hundred pages each, and the Second Canto, with ten chapters, would take two volumes. Up through the Ninth Canto there would be maybe thirty volumes. The Tenth Canto, containing ninety chapters, would take twenty volumes. There were twelve cantos, and so the total would be at least sixty volumes. He thought he might be able to finish it in five to seven years: "If the Lord keeps me physically fit, then in the fulfillment of Śrīla Prabhupāda's will I could complete this work."

He decided to introduce the first volume with a biographical sketch of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, "The Ideal Preacher of the Bhāgavatam." The reader could best appreciate the Bhāgavatam by seeing its practical demonstration in the life of Lord Caitanya. The special feature of Lord Caitanya's presentation had been His desire that Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam "be preached in every nook and corner of the world by everyone who happens to take his birth in India." Lord Caitanya had called Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam the "spotless Purāṇa" and had considered the chanting and hearing of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam along with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra to be a complete scientific process for developing pure love of God.

Working from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's commentary on Caitanya-caritāmṛta and Caitanya-bhāgavata, Bhaktivedanta Swami gave a fifty-page synopsis of Lord Caitanya's life and His saṅkīrtana movement. He described Lord Caitanya's divine ecstasies, His philosophical confrontations with leading scholars of the day, and His inauguration of the saṅkīrtana movement, the congregational chanting of the holy name. Bhaktivedanta Swami especially connected Lord Caitanya's life and teachings to what he saw as the present crucial time in history. Help for humanity in "this momentous hour of need" lay in the Vedic literature, and especially in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

We know that the foreign invaders of India could break down some of the monumental architectural work in India, but they were unable to break up the perfect ideals of human civilisation so far kept hidden within the Sanskrit language of Vedic wisdom.

The Sanskrit language had protected the secret for thousands of centuries, but now the secret had to be released to the world.

As he approached the first verses of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhakti vedanta Swami became absorbed in the Bhāgavatam's purpose. The verses stressed that the Bhāgavatam alone could save society from the evil influences of the Age of Kali. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's recommendation for this age was simply to hear from the pure devotees about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

The setting of the Bhāgavatam was a gathering of sages at Naimiṣāranya about five thousand years ago, at the dawn of the present Age of Kali. Foreseeing the degradation of humanity, the sages asked the senior member of the assembly, Sūta Gosvāmī, "Now that Lord Kṛṣṇa, the shelter of all religious principles, has returned to His spiritual abode, where are religious principles to be found?" Sūta's answer was that the epic Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, "which is as brilliant as the sun," was a literary incarnation of God and would give direction to persons lost in the dense darkness of Kali-yuga.

In the beginning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śrīla Vyāsadeva, under the instruction of his spiritual master, Nārada Muni, sat down and entered a deep meditation. In trance he saw the Supreme Personality of Godhead, His energies, and the suffering souls of Kali-yuga. He also saw that the remedy for their suffering was pure devotional service. With this vision and the instructions of his spiritual master as his inspiration, Vyāsadeva set about to compile Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to give the highest benefit to the suffering souls of Kali-yuga.

In presenting the literary incarnation of God, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, for the benefit of the Western world, Bhaktivedanta Swami realized that he was performing an important task, following in the footsteps of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. As Śrīla Vyāsadeva had had a vision of Kṛṣṇa and had received direction from his spiritual master before beginning his literary mission, Bhaktivedanta Swami had his vision and had received instructions from his spiritual master. Bhaktivedanta Swami envisioned distributing in mass the book of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. He would not merely translate it; he would personally take it to the West, present it, and teach people in the West—through the book and in person—how to develop pure love of God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The communist party has become popular simply by distributing their literatures. In Calcutta, the communist agents were inviting friends and reading their literature. The Russians never came to India, but by distributing literature in every language they got a pretty good number of followers. If it is possible for ordinary, third-class, mundane literature, why shouldn't transcendental literature create devotees all over the world? There is good potency for pushing on these literatures very vigorously from village to village. The bhāgavata-dharma is the original religion of the human society. Whatever else may be passing as religion has come from the Vedic literature. People are after these books. They are hankering for them. Lord Caitanya said that in every town and village on the surface of the world they will know the message of the saṅkīrtana movement. This means that in every village and town all over the world there are many candidates who are awaiting this message. It is transcendental literature. Nobody can challenge it. It is done so nicely, without any spot, the spotless Purāṇa.

Bhaktivedanta Swami put his faith in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, giving up almost all other kinds of missionary activity. And this had been the advice and example of his spiritual master and of Lord Caitanya. They had not been interested in building costly temples or in creating many neophyte disciples. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had stressed preaching. Preaching meant books, and the

best book was Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. To write and publish the Bhāgavatam for the enlightenment of the general populace was real service to the Lord. That was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's opinion. He had preferred publishing books to establishing temples, and he had specifically told his disciples to write books. It was the business of advanced, empowered devotees to write books, publish them, and distribute them widely. A program to distribute transcendental literature everywhere (with even more expertise than the communists) would create a great positive effect on the people of Europe and America. And if Europeans and Americans turned to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then the rest of the world would follow. Bhaktivedānta Swami continued working alone in his room at Chippiwada, absorbed in thoughts of spreading the news of Kṛṣṇa on a scale never before attempted.

He sometimes wondered how Westerners, who were so far removed from the Vedic culture, could adopt it. They were meat-eaters, mlecchas. When one of his Godbrothers had gone to England, the Marquis of Zetland, on hearing the four prohibitions against sinful life, had laughed scornfully, "Impossible!" But Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam spoke for itself.

"Sri Krishna the Personality of Godhead who is also the Paramatma in every one's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, does cleanse the desire for material enjoyment in the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge for hearing His (Krishna's) messages which are themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted."

Although he was known as an English preacher, Bhaktivedānta Swami knew there were always faults in his presentation in that foreign language; and there was no editor to correct them. But such technical faults would not keep him from printing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. This idea was also presented in the opening chapters of the Bhāgavatam. "The literature which is full with description of transcendental glories of the Name, Fame, Forms, Pastimes etc. of the Unlimited Supreme Lord, is a different creation of transcendental vocabulary all meant for bringing about a revolution in the impious life of a misdirected civilization of the world. Such transcendental literatures even though irregularly composed, is heard, sung and accepted by the purified men who are thoroughly honest."

Bhaktivedānta Swami wrote in his purport: "We know that in our honest attempt for presenting this great literature conveying transcendental message for reviving the God-consciousness of the people in general, as a matter of re-spiritualisation of the world atmosphere, is fret with many difficulties... our capacity of presenting the matter in adequate language, specially a foreign language, will certainly fail and there may be so many literary discrepancies inspite of our honest attempt to present it in the proper way. But we are sure that with our all faults in this connection the seriousness of the subject matter will be taken into consideration and the leaders of the society will still accept this on account of its being an honest attempt for glorifying the Almighty Great so much now badly needed. When there is fire in the house, the inmates of the house go out for help from the neighbours who may be foreigners to such inmates and yet without any adequate language the victims of the fire express themselves and the neighbours understand the need even though not expressed in adequate language. The same spirit of cooperation is needed in the matter of broadcasting this transcendental message of the Śrīmad Bhagwatam throughout the whole polluted atmosphere of the present day world situation. After all it is a technical science of spiritual values and as such we are concerned with the techniques and not with the language. If the techniques of this great literature are understood by the people of the world, there is the success."

Certainly Kali-yuga was such an emergency—the house was on fire. Honest men who could understand the need would welcome Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, even though it was now being presented “with so many faulty and broken linguistic technicalities...” Bhaktivedanta Swami was presenting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam unchanged, with the greatest respect for Śrīla Vyāsadeva. And that was his cardinal virtue. He was adding his own realizations, but not in a spirit of trying to surpass the previous spiritual masters. In the all-important matter of presenting the subject strictly in paramparā, Bhaktivedanta Swami suffered from no “faulty and broken technicalities.” He knew that without the paramparā the Bhāgavatam purports would have no value. Day and night he typed at his desk beneath the small adjustable light that dangled from the ceiling on its cord. He sat on a thin mat, his back to the large pyramid that stood oddly upright within the bare room. Pages accumulated, and he kept them in place with stones. Food and sleep, although necessary, were only incidental. He was completely convinced that his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam would create a revolution in a misdirected civilization. Thus he translated each word and gave each purport with exacting care and concentration. But it had to be done as quickly as possible.

* * *

In February of 1961, on Vyāsa-pūjā day, the anniversary of the appearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Bhaktivedanta Swami was again in Vṛndāvana. In honor of their spiritual master, some of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's disciples had gathered, offered flowers before his picture, and held congregational chanting in the temple. But Bhaktivedanta Swami thought that they should be doing much more than that; they should be planning and executing the worldwide preaching mission that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had desired. Instead, they were a gathering of independent individuals, each with his own small idea, each maintaining a small center or living at a center, but with no world programs, not even a program for India. Most of them had no plans or vision beyond their own bodily maintenance. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had asked for a governing body to conduct his movement, but there was no governing body, and practically there was no movement. Some who had fought bitterly were again on speaking terms and feared that any sudden organizational attempts now might simply stir up old animosities. At least they could gather together and make an offering to their spiritual master.

Amongst his Godbrothers, Bhaktivedanta Swami was a junior sannyāsī. Although a recognized writer and editor, he had no temple or followers. Yet he knew he was trying to follow Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He saw himself helpless and alone against the vast forces of māyā. His Godbrothers were not an army united against māyā's forces, but were more like apathetic monks, growing old, holding on to religious principles and rituals, devoid of life. How could they gather to worship their spiritual master without distressfully admitting their failure and, in the spirit of “better late than never,” trying to rectify it?

Since the custom on Vyāsa-pūjā day was for each disciple to write an offering glorifying his spiritual master and to share it within the assembly of Godbrothers, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote an offering—more like an explosion than a eulogy—and humbly placed it before his Godbrothers for their response.

Even now, my Godbrothers, you return here on the order of our master,

and together we engage in this pūjā.

But simply a festival of flowers and fruits does not constitute worship. The

one who serves the message of the guru really worships him...

Oh, shame! My dear brothers, aren't you embarrassed? In the manner of businessmen you increase your disciples.

Our master said to preach! Let the neophytes remain inside the temples and simply ring the bells...

But just take a good look at the terrible situation that has arisen. Everyone has become a sense enjoyer and has given up preaching...

From the seas, across the earth, penetrate the universal shell; come together and preach this Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Then our master's service will be in proper order. Make your promise today. Give up all your politics and diplomacy.

If the disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī could join and preach together, there was every chance that they could create a spiritual revolution within the sinful world. That had been the hope of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and Bhaktivedānta Swami expressed that hope in his Vyāsa-pūjā offering.

When will that day come when a temple will be established in every house in every corner of the world?

When will the high-court judge be a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava with tilaka beautifully decorating his forehead?

When will a Vaiṣṇava winning votes be elected president of the land and preaching be spread everywhere?

As he read the poem, its truth exploding in the midst of the gathering of aging sannyāsīs, some approved, and some were incensed. Their meeting, however, took no new direction; they did not sit down together and plan as he had pleaded. Swami Mahārāja's poem was taken as another poetic expression or as an opinion. The Godbrothers were inclined to let the old wounds heal with the passing of time. To go back over the whole thing again and reconstruct the mission as it had been before, when Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been present, and to attempt all those ambitious programs—how was it possible? They were getting old. Some did not want to leave the shelter of Vṛndāvana. They would worship Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī within the holy dhāma. If Bhaktivedānta Swami could do something more, let him go ahead and try.

Bhaktivedanta Swami returned to Keśi-ghāṭa, thoughtful. For many years he had been unable to take a leading part in the mission because of family commitments. In 1935, in Bombay, his Godbrothers had even asked him to be president of the maṭha there, but Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said that it was not necessary that Abhay Charan join them; he would come in his own way. Now, by the grace of his spiritual master, he was ready to fulfill the meaning of sannyāsa. The Kṛṣṇa conscious world he had described in his poem was not a utopia, presented merely to incite his Godbrothers, a dreamer's talk of the impossible. It was possible. But in any case, he had to write and print Kṛṣṇa conscious books and preach abroad. It was what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī wanted. If his Godbrothers would not do it jointly, then he would do it.

* * *

In January of 1961 one of Bhaktivedanta Swami's Delhi acquaintances had shown him an announcement for the Congress for Cultivating Human Spirit, a convention to be held in Tokyo, May 10-20. The theme was world peace through cultivating human spirit. International participants were invited. As soon as Bhaktivedanta Swami had seen it, he had wanted to go. Although his main interest had always been the U.S., if Japan presented itself first, why not? And their invitation was in English. If they accepted his reservation, they would pay for his board and lodging at the convention hotel, although he would have to pay his own travel expenses.

Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote to the sponsors, the International Foundation for Cultural Harmony, and proposed a speech, "How Should One Cultivate Human Spirit?" The secretary general of the foundation, Mr. Toshihiro Nakano, wrote back to him at Keśi-ghāṭa, expressing his high regard both for Indian spiritual culture and for his proposed presentation. Mr. Nakano also enclosed an official certificate, as he had requested, stating that Bhaktivedanta Swami was a bona fide visitor to their convention whose expenses in Japan would be paid. They requested— "To Whom It May Concern"—that his passport and visa be granted in time for his May 10 arrival in Japan.

Bhaktivedanta Swami then conceived a special project for the convention. The Tenth Canto, Twentieth Chapter, of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam presents a description of autumn in Vṛndāvana, and for each seasonal phenomenon the Bhāgavatam presents a parallel teaching from the Vedas. For example, it compares the dark, cloudy evening of the rainy autumn season to the present Age of Kali, when the bright stars of Vedic wisdom (the saints and scriptures) are temporarily obscured by a godless civilization. The chapter contains dozens of such examples, and Bhaktivedanta Swami proposed fifty commentaries to accompany fifty illustrations to be displayed at the convention. He began preparing the commentaries, which he entitled "The Light of Bhagwat." He wrote directions from which an artist could design a painting to go with each "Lesson from the Picture." Fifty pictures and commentaries, Bhaktivedanta Swami felt, would make an impressive display for visitors at the convention. The convention organizers liked the idea.

As for your proposal to get pictures drawing by artists according to your suggestion, the institution department of the congress will immediately take people disposal for it under the full consideration of about some specimen idea of picture which will be given to us by you, so I should like to get them as soon as possible.

Bhaktivedanta Swami worked quickly to produce a twenty-thousand-word manuscript—fifty lessons for fifty illustrations. The pictures were to depict the forests, fields, and skies of Vṛndāvana during the rainy season, and the lessons were sometimes criticisms of godless governments, materialists, and false religionists, sometimes assertions of moral principles and God consciousness, and sometimes depictions of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His eternal associates in Vṛndāvana.

Everything went smoothly between Bhaktivedanta Swami and the sponsors in Japan. The problem was to raise the travel fare. He approached the likely sources, writing to the central government's Ministry for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs; he presented his certificate from Mr. Nakano and explained his position as a sannyāsī. In late March the ministry sent him a form to complete and return. Time was getting short. On March 29 he wrote the vice president, Dr. Radhakrishnan, with whom he had a speaking acquaintance (as well as a philosophical difference).

You know that I am a Sannyasi without any relation with Bank, neither I am attached with financing institution. But the Japanese organisers have liked my literatures and they want me to be present there.

He pleaded that since the great ācāryas of India had formerly presented their knowledge for the benefit of the world, the Indian government today should send representatives of the ācāryas “to deliver the message of Atma or the Human Spirit.” He also wrote the deputy manager of Scindia Steam Navigation Company in Bombay, reminding him of his 1958 offer to give a fifty-percent concession on a ticket to the United States. After explaining his invitation from Mr. Nakano in Japan, Bhaktivedanta Swami pointed out that the full round-trip fare to Japan would be less than half the fare to the United States.

Trying all possibilities at once, and with less than a month and a half before the convention, he wrote to another potential donor, Mr. Brijratan S. Mohatta, who had once expressed his willingness to send Bhaktivedanta Swami to South America when an Indian sponsor there had written expressing interest. At that time, Bhaktivedanta Swami had been unable to get the proper certification from the Indian government. But here, he explained, was a new opportunity to present the message of the Vedic literature to an international gathering of interested people; and passage to Japan was less than to South America. On the same day he wrote to Mr. Mohatta he also mailed his completed form to the Ministry for Scientific Research. In answer to their question as to why he was asking for a donation and whether he had done so before, he replied:

Before this I never asked the Ministry for any financial assistance as there was no need for it. As Sannyasi I can ask for financial help when there is absolute necessity. Our life is dedicated to render service to the humanity at large for reviving the dormant spiritual consciousness.

Meanwhile, his other arrangements proceeded with full cooperation from Japan. He had already sent Mr. Nakano the first twenty illustrative ideas from “The Light of Bhagwat.” “Japan is famous for artistic work,” he wrote, “and India is famous for spiritual culture. We should now combine...” He suggested they also print the text and pictures as a book.

Mr. Nakano assured Bhaktivedanta Swami that they would be eager to meet him at Haneda airport; they would be readily recognizable, since they would be holding a flag. And if he liked, he could

stay in Japan for an entire month and hold local meetings after the scheduled convention. Mr. Nakano also asked a favor of Bhaktivedanta Swami. To solidify relations with the mayors of three Japanese cities, he asked that Bhaktivedanta Swami send letters to the mayors, requesting their full support of the Human Spirit Congress. Bhaktivedanta Swami immediately complied.

By now it was April, and no money had come. Finally, after a personal interview in which he received a definite no from Dr. Radhakrishnan, Bhaktivedanta Swami turned to Mr. Nakano in disappointment. On April 18 he wrote:

I am in due receipt of your letter of the 9th instant and I am grateful to you for all that you have said for me. I am a humble creature and I am just trying to do my bit in this connection because I was so ordered by my spiritual master, Shri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj...

While I am feeling too much ecstasy for the reception arrangement you are doing for me, I beg to inform you that my passage expenses which is near about Rs. 3500/- is not yet settled. I submitted one application to the Govt. of India for help and the copy of my application is also sent herewith. I also wrote a private letter to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in this connection and the reply which I have received is also enclosed herewith.

All these are not very encouraging for me. I therefore saw the Vice President today personally but he says the same thing as he has written in his letter. Although the matter is not yet hopeless altogether I am disturbed in my mind thinking what shall I do in case the Govt. denies to help. I am therefore seeking your good advice in this connection. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said to me that you had also invited him to attend your congress and he opines that the passage expenses might have been paid by you.

The hope and expectation of the congress is undoubtedly very great and I wish that I may fully utilise this opportunity for general welfare of the entire human society. I have fully explained my views authoritatively in my statements already sent to you for publication and the gist idea is expressed in the letter of the Mayors, the copy of which is also enclosed.

As a Sannyasi, I have no personal purse for expenditure. Under the circumstances if the Government denies to help for the passage then I will have to ask for the same from you otherwise my going to the congress will end in dream only. I have very little faith in the dealings of the politicians and specially of the Indian politicians.

From the conversation of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, it appeared to me that the Govt. does not approve of such congress as are organised by private persons and as such they do not participate in such congress. I shall wait for the final decision for one week more when the matter will be clear, yes or no.

Replies from prospective donors in India were all negative. On April 20, he cabled Mr. Nakano.

As you have developed a deep love for me, I dare to ask you to send me financial help to take me to Japan. I think you can immediately instruct your Embassy in Delhi to do the needful and dispatch me to Japan on your behalf. I am feeling too much to meet you and the congress so that we can

build up a solid institute for spiritual cultivation. I shall await your instruction by cable to fix up my programme.

But Mr. Nakano could not help. And Bhaktivedanta Swami's effort ended in a dream only.

* * *

In July 1962 Bhaktivedanta Swami changed his Vṛndāvana residence from Vaiṣṇī-gopālājī temple to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. For three years he had been paying the rent of five rupees per month for his Rādhā-Dāmodara rooms and paying for the extensive repairs. Now the main room had electric lighting and a fan, and the walls had been plastered and painted. The room was seven feet by fifteen feet, with smooth plaster walls and a floor of sandstone squares of uneven sizes, the same as the stone tiles cemented in front of the samādhi of Rūpa Gosvāmī. The room was furnished with a small, low desk, a kuśa mat, and a wooden cot with a rope-woven surface to lie on. The view was not the panorama he had enjoyed at Keśi-ghāṭa, and the neighborhood was not so secluded, but now, without even moving from his room, he could look into the temple and see a portion of the altar and the four-foot-high form of Vṛndāvana-candra, the black marble Kṛṣṇa Deity Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had worshiped hundreds of years ago. The main room was connected to the kitchen by a ten-foot-long veranda, which faced the courtyard, and from his kitchen he could see the samādhi of Rūpa Gosvāmī. So the place was superior to his room at the Vaiṣṇī-gopālājī temple, because now he was living in the temple of Jīva Gosvāmī, where great souls like the Gosvāmīs Rūpa, Sanātana, Raghunātha, and Jīva had all gathered, taken prasādam, chanted, and discussed Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. It was the best place to work on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

* * *

At 1:00 A.M., when no one else was up and it was very quiet, Bhaktivedanta Swami would wake and begin writing. Since electric failures were not uncommon in Vṛndāvana, he would often work by lantern light. But in any case, a beam of light would shine out from his room onto the veranda, while inside the room he worked under its brightness. While he wrote in stillness, sometimes a toad, as dry as the stone floor, would hop out of hiding and across the floor, exiting through the cement latticework of the opposite wall. Sometimes a tiny mouse would run out from behind a window shutter and hide in another place. Otherwise, the room was complete sanctified stillness, and the inspiration of being in the presence of the six Gosvāmīs was strong. Above the open courtyard, the sky would be full of clearly visible stars. As he worked, the only sounds would come from the town, perhaps of a dog barking in the distance.

At 4:00 A.M., the temple pūjārī, who slept under a shelter near the Deity doors, would awake, turn on an electric light and, with a long pole, clear the bats from the rafters. At 5:00 A.M., after waking the Deities, the pūjārī would open the doors before the altar and begin maṅgala-ārati. He would offer a flame while a few resident devotees gathered and chanted, playing instruments; usually someone would bang a gong while someone else rang a large bell.

Any sound from the courtyard carried immediately to Bhaktivedanta Swami's quarters, and the clanging bell and gong would suddenly reverberate against the walls of his small room. From his sitting place, he could see only Vṛndāvana-candra, on the left of the altar. Sometimes he would

pause at his work and walk into the courtyard to see the Deities and Their āratī. The altar was filled with Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa who had been worshiped by Jīva Gosvāmī and other Vaiṣṇava ācāryas hundreds of years ago. After ten minutes, the pūjārī, having offered the flame and then a conchshell filled with water, would turn and sprinkle offered water on the heads of the devotees, and the ceremony would end.

After working a few hours on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhaktivedanta Swami would sit in his room and chant japa. As the morning sky turned light blue, the stars would vanish, and residents of Vṛndāvana would arrive to visit the Deities and the samādhis of the Gosvāmīs. Old women would enter the temple, calling out, “Jaya Rādhē” in broken voices.

When Bhaktivedanta Swami opened the shutters, his room would fill with light. His windows faced a courtyard, but they were not so much windows as cement latticework in the wall; although passersby could not easily see into the room, the latticework allowed light to enter. In the morning light, the room was clearly revealed: the arched ceiling, the freshly painted walls with arched niches, the floor of inlaid stone. Bhaktivedanta Swami's thin sannyāsa daṇḍa, wrapped in heavy saffron khādī, leaned against one corner of the room. On one shelf he had placed a picture of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, on another a stack of books and manuscripts. The room's two doors appeared flimsy even when locked, and the whole room tilted slightly to the left. It was bare but peaceful.

Often, sitting on the veranda between the two rooms, he would view the courtyard, the altar, and the Deities. Rādhā-Dāmodara, Vṛndāvana-candra, and several other Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities awaited Their visitors. During the morning, the Deity doors remained open as a regular file of visitors turned the temple into a bustling place of pilgrimage. No one stayed very long. Some had rigid schedules to visit many temples and hurried on. Poor people and also local businessmen, their wives in colorful sārīs—all devotees—headed towards the altar, calling, “Jaya ho,” “Jaya Rādhē!” After greeting the Deities, they would disappear through the door to the outdoor area of the temple compound to visit the samādhis.

Although in Vṛndāvana there were hundreds of small templelike tombs honoring past Vaiṣṇava ācāryas, Bhaktivedanta Swami regularly visited the chief samādhis, those of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. Within a separate area of the temple compound were the bhajana-kuṭīr and the samādhī of Rūpa Gosvāmī. Bhaktivedanta Swami often sat chanting japa before Rūpa Gosvāmī's samādhī. The line of pilgrims from the temple would continue entering the outdoor area of the compound, coming to offer daṇḍavats to Rūpa Gosvāmī. Most pilgrims considered this the most important feature of their visit to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, and even if they offered respect nowhere else, they would stop before the samādhī of Rūpa Gosvāmī. They would stop with folded hands and bow, chanting Jaya Rādhē or, with their hands in their bead bags, chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, circumambulating the samādhī.

Bhaktivedanta Swami would sit and chant even after the early-morning rush of visitors, or sometimes he would walk to the nearby temples of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara or Rādhā-Madana-mohana, always returning by eleven to cook his meal. As he cooked, and later as he sat to take his prasādam, he could see through the latticework the samādhī of Rūpa Gosvāmī. Feeling Rūpa Gosvāmī's presence, he would think of his own mission for his spiritual master.

The devotees of Lord Caitanya are known as rūpānugas, followers of Rūpa Gosvāmī; without following the teachings and example of Rūpa Gosvāmī, one cannot enter the path of pure devotion to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was especially known as a strict rūpānuga, as described in the Sanskrit prayers written in his honor: "I offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the personified energy of Śrī Caitanya's mercy, who delivers devotional service enriched with conjugal love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, coming exactly in the line of revelation of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. I offer my respectful obeisances unto you, who are the personified teachings of Lord Caitanya. You are the deliverer of the fallen souls. You do not tolerate any statement that is against the teachings of devotional service enunciated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī."

Bhaktivedānta Swami's spiritual master and the previous spiritual masters in the disciplic succession had wanted the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to spread all over the world, and as Bhaktivedānta Swami daily gathered inspiration, sitting before Rūpa Gosvāmī's samādhi, he prayed to his spiritual predecessors for guidance. The intimate direction he received from them was an absolute dictation, and no government, no publisher, nor anyone else could shake or diminish it. Rūpa Gosvāmī wanted him to go to the West; Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī wanted him to go to the West; Kṛṣṇa had arranged that he be brought to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple to receive their blessings. At the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, he felt he had entered an eternal residence known only to pure devotees of the Lord. Yet although they were allowing him to associate intimately with them in the place of their pastimes, they were ordering him to leave—to leave Rādhā-Dāmodara and Vṛndāvana and to deliver the message of the ācāryas to forgetful parts of the world.

* * *

In June the weather became intolerably hot, and one could not remain active through the afternoon. During the most oppressive hours, Bhaktivedānta Swami would shut his doors and shutters and run the overhead fan. By evening the heat would abate, again a flurry of visitors would arrive, and in the temple compound there would be evening kīrtanas. Sitting on his veranda, Bhaktivedānta Swami would sometimes talk with visitors, or sometimes they would come to his door and observe him as he worked at his typewriter. He was known in Vṛndāvana as a scholar and a sublime devotee. But he kept to himself as much as possible, especially in the summer of 1962, working on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

That was his real purpose in coming here: to prepare the books he could distribute to the people of the West. Although as yet he had no means for traveling even as far as Japan, and no means for printing books, these were the goals for which he worked. He had not come to Vṛndāvana to die and return to Godhead. Rather, he had come because it was the ideal place to gain spiritual strength for his main life's work. The exact shape of his future mission Bhaktivedānta Swami did not know, but he did know that he must prepare himself for preaching Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to the English-speaking Western world. He must become a perfectly equipped instrument of his masters. And if they desired, they would send him.

SPL 11: The Dream Come True

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Dream Come True

I planned that I must go to America. Generally they go to London, but I did not want to go to London. I was simply thinking how to go to New York. I was scheming, "Whether I shall go this way, through Tokyo, Japan, or that way? Which way is cheaper?" That was my proposal. And I was targeting to New York always. Sometimes I was dreaming that I have come to New York.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

Writing was only half the battle; the other half was publishing. Both Bhaktivedanta Swami and his spiritual master wanted to see Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam printed in English and distributed widely. According to the teachings of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the most modern methods of printing and distributing books should be used to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although many books of Vaiṣṇava wisdom had already been perfectly presented by Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, and Jīva Gosvāmī, the manuscripts now sat deteriorating in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple and other locations, and even the Gaudiya Math's printings of the Gosvāmīs' works were not being widely distributed. One of Bhaktivedanta Swami's Godbrothers asked him why he was spending so much time and effort trying to make a new commentary on the Bhāgavatam, since so many great ācāryas had already commented upon it. But in Bhaktivedanta Swami's mind there was no question; his spiritual master had given him an order.

Commercial publishers, however, were not interested in the sixty-volume Bhāgavatam series, and Bhaktivedanta Swami was not interested in anything less than a sixty-volume paramparā presentation of verses, synonyms, and purports based on the commentaries of the previous ācāryas. But to publish such books he would have to raise private donations and publish at his own expense. Rādhā-Dāmodara temple may have been the best place for writing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, but not for printing and publishing it. For that he would have to go to New Delhi.

Among his Delhi contacts, Bhaktivedanta Swami considered Hitsaran Sharma a likely helper. Although when he had stayed in Mr. Sharma's home Mr. Sharma had appreciated him more as a member of a genre than as an individual, at least Mr. Sharma was inclined to help sādhus, and he recognized Bhaktivedanta Swami as a genuinely religious person. Therefore, when Bhaktivedanta Swami approached him in his office, he was willing to help, considering it a religious duty to propagate Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Hitsaran Sharma was qualified to help for two reasons: he was the secretary to J. D. Dalmia, a wealthy philanthropist, and he was the owner of a commercial printing works, Radha Press. According to Mr. Sharma, Mr. Dalmia would not directly give money to Bhaktivedanta Swami, even if his secretary suggested it. Mr. Sharma therefore advised Bhaktivedanta Swami to go to Gorakhpur and show his manuscript to Hanuman Prasad Poddar, a religious publisher. Accepting this as good advice, Bhaktivedanta Swami journeyed to Gorakhpur, some 475 miles from Delhi.

Even such a trip as this constituted a financial strain. Bhaktivedanta Swami's daily ledger showed a balance of one hundred and thirty rupees as of August 8, 1962, the day he started for Gorakhpur.

By the time he reached Lucknow he was down to fifty-seven rupees. Travel from Lucknow to Gorakhpur cost another six rupees, and the ricksha to Mr. Poddar's home cost eighty paisa.

But the trip was well worth the cost. Bhaktivedanta Swami presented Mr. Poddar with his letter of introduction from Hitsaran Sharma and then showed him his manuscript. After briefly examining the manuscript, Mr. Poddar concluded it to be a highly developed work that should be supported. He agreed to send a donation of four thousand rupees to the Dalmia Trust in Delhi, to be used towards the publication of Śrī A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Indian printers do not always require full payment before they begin a job, provided they receive a substantial advance payment. After the job is printed and bound, a customer who has not made the complete payment takes a portion of books commensurate to what he has paid, and after selling those books he uses his profit to buy more. Bhaktivedanta Swami estimated that printing one volume would cost seven thousand rupees. So he was three thousand short. He raised a few hundred rupees more by going door to door throughout Delhi. Then he went back to Radha Press and asked Hitsaran Sharma to begin. Mr. Sharma agreed.

Radha Press had already produced much of the first two chapters when Bhaktivedanta Swami objected that the type was not large enough. He wanted twelve-point type, but the Radha Press had only ten-point. So Mr. Sharma agreed to take the work to another printer, Mr. Gautam Sharma of O. K. Press.

In printing Bhaktivedanta Swami's Volume One of the First Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, O. K. Press printed four book pages twice on a side of one sheet of paper twenty by twenty-six inches. But before running the full eleven hundred copies, they would print a proof, which Bhaktivedanta Swami would read. Then, following the corrected proofs, the printers would correct the hand-set type and run a second proof, which Bhaktivedanta would also read. Usually he would also find errors on the second proof; if so, they would print a third. If he found no errors on the third proof, they would then print the final pages. At this pace Bhaktivedanta Swami was able to order small quantities of paper as he could afford it—from six to ten reams at a time, ordered two weeks in advance.

Even as the volume was being printed, he was still writing the last chapters. When the proofs were ready at O. K. Press, he would pick up the proofs, return to his room at Chippiwada, correct the proofs, and then return them. Sometimes fourteen-year-old Kantvedi, who lived at the Chippiwada temple with his parents, would carry the proofs back and forth for the Swami. But in the last months of 1962, Bhaktivedanta Swami usually made a daily walk to O. K. Press.

His walk through the tight, crowded lanes of Chippiwada soon led him to a road close to the Jama Mosque, and that road led into the noisy, heavily trafficked Chawri Bazaar. The neighborhood was a busy paper district, where laborers with ropes strapped across their shoulders pulled stout wooden carts, heavily loaded with stacks of paper, on small iron wheels. For two blocks, paper dealers were the only businesses—Hari Ram Gupta and Company, Roop Chand and Sons, Bengal Paper Mill Company Limited, Universal Traders, Janta Paper Mart—one after another even down the side alleys.

The neighborhood storefronts were colorful and disorderly. Pedestrian traffic was so hectic that for a person to dally even for a moment would cause a disruption. Carts and rickshas carried paper and other goods back and forth through the streets. Sometimes a laborer would jog past with a hefty stack of pages on his head, the stack weighing down on either end. Traffic was swift, and an unmindful or slow-footed pedestrian risked being struck by a load protruding from the head of a bearer or from a passing cart. Occasionally a man would be squatting on the roadside, smashing chunks of coal into small pieces to sell. Tiny corner smoke shops drew small gatherings of customers for cigarettes or pān. The shopkeeper would rapidly spread the pān spices on a betel leaf, and the customer would walk off down the street chewing the pān and spitting out red-stained saliva.

Amidst this milieu, as the Chawri Bazaar commercial district blended into tenement life and children played in the hazardous streets, Bhaktivedanta Swami was a gentle-looking yet determined figure. As he walked past the tenements, the tile sellers, the grain sellers, the sweet shops, and the printers, overhead would be electric wires, pigeons, and the clotheslines from the tenement balconies. Finally he would come to O. K. Press, directly across from a small mosque. He would come, carrying the corrected proofs, to anxiously oversee the printing work.

After four months, when the whole book had been printed and the sheets were stacked on the floor of the press, Mr. Hitsaran Sharma arranged for the work to be moved to a bindery. The binding was done by an ancient operation, mostly by hand, and it took another month. Bhaktivedanta Swami would come and observe the workers. A row of men sat in a small room, surrounded by stacks of printed paper. The first man would take one of the large printed sheets, rapidly fold it twice, and pass it to the next man, who performed the next operation. The pages would be folded, stitched, and collated, then put into a vise and hammered together before being trimmed on three sides with a handsaw and glued. Bit by bit, the book would be prepared for the final hard cover.

In addition to his visits to O. K. Press and the bindery, Bhaktivedanta Swami would also occasionally travel by bus across the Yamunā River to Mr. Hitsaran Sharma's Radha Press. The Radha Press was printing one thousand dust jackets for the volume.

Hitsaran Sharma: Swamiji was going hither and thither. He was getting whatever collections he could and depositing them. And he was always mixing with many persons, going hither and thither. With me he was very fond that I should do everything as soon as possible. He had a great haste. He used to say, "Time is going, time is going. Quick, do it!" He would be annoyed with me also, and he would have me do his work first. But I was in the service of Dalmia, and I would tell him, "Your work has to be secondary for me." But he would say, "Now you have wasted my two days. What is this, Sharmaji? I am coming here, I told you in the morning to do this, and you have not done it even now." But I would reply, "I have got no time during the day." Then he would say, "Then you have wasted my complete day." So he was very much pressing me. This was his temperament.

The binding was reddish, the color of an earthen brick, and was inlaid with gold lettering. Bhaktivedanta Swami had designed the dust jacket himself, and he had commissioned a young Bengali artist named Salit to execute it. It was a wraparound picture of the entire spiritual and material manifestations. Dominating the front cover was a pink lotus, and within its whorl were

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their pastimes in Vṛndāvana, along with Lord Caitanya chanting and dancing with His associates. From Kṛṣṇa's lotus planet emanated yellow rays of light, and in that effulgence were many spiritual planets, appearing like so many suns. Sitting within each planet was a different four-armed form of Nārāyaṇa, each with His name lettered beneath the planet: Trivikrama, Keśava, Puruṣottama, and so on. Within an oval at the bottom of the front cover, Mahā-Viṣṇu was exhaling the material universes. On the inside cover was Bhaktivedanta Swami's explanation of the cover illustration.

When the printing and binding were completed, there were eleven hundred copies. Bhaktivedanta Swami would receive one hundred copies, and the printer would keep the balance. From the sale of the one hundred copies, Bhaktivedanta Swami would continue to pay off his debt to the printer and binder; then he would receive another supply of books. This would continue until he had finished paying his debt. His plan was to then publish a second volume from the profits of the first, and a third volume from the profits of the second.

Kantvedi went to pick up the first one hundred copies. He hired a man who put the books in large baskets, placed them on his hand truck, and then hauled them through the streets to the Chippiwada temple, where Bhaktivedanta Swami stacked them in his room on a bench.

Bhaktivedanta Swami went out alone to sell his books and present them to important people. Dr. Radhakrishnan, who gave him a personal audience, agreed to read the book and write his opinion. Hanuman Prasad Poddar was the first to write a favorable review:

It is a source of great pleasure for me that a long cherished dream has materialised and is going to be materialised with this and the would-be publications. I thank the Lord that due to His grace this publication could see the light.

Bhaktivedanta Swami went to the major libraries, universities, and schools in Delhi, where the librarians found him "calm and quiet," "noble," "polite," "scholarly," "with a specific glow in him." Traveling on foot, he visited school administration offices throughout Delhi and placed copies in more than forty schools in the Delhi area. The Ministry of Education (which had previously denied him assistance) placed an order for fifty copies for selected university and institutional libraries throughout India. The ministry paid him six hundred rupees plus packing and postage charges, and Bhaktivedanta Swami mailed the books to the designated libraries. The U. S. embassy purchased eighteen copies, to be distributed in America through the Library of Congress.

The institutional sales were brisk, but then sales slowed. As the only agent, Bhaktivedanta Swami was now spending hours just to sell a few copies. He was eager to print the second volume, yet until enough money came from the first, he could not print. In the meantime he continued translating and writing purports. Writing so many volumes was a huge task that would take many years. And at his present rate, with sales so slow, he would not be able to complete the work in his lifetime.

Although there were many who took part in the production of the book and still others who became customers, only Bhaktivedanta Swami deeply experienced the successes and failures of the venture. It was his project, and he was responsible. No one was eager to see him writing prolifically, and no one demanded that it be printed. Even when the sales slowed to a trickle, the managers of O. K. Press were not distressed; they would give him the balance of his books only when he paid for them. And since it was also he who had the burden of hiring O. K. Press to print a second volume, the pressure was on him to go out and sell as many copies of the first volume as possible. For Hanuman Prasad Poddar, the volume had been something to admire in passing; for Hitsaran Sharma, it had been something he had tended to after his day's work for Mr. Dalmia; for the boy who lived at Chippiwada, the book had meant a few errands; for the paper dealers it had meant a small order; for Dr. Radhakrishnan it had been but the slightest, soon-forgotten matter in a life crammed with national politics and Hindu philosophizing. But Bhaktivedanta Swami, by his full engagement in producing the Bhāgavatam, felt bliss and assurance that Kṛṣṇa was pleased. He did not, however, intend for the Bhāgavatam to be his private affair. It was the sorely needed medicine for the ills of Kali-yuga, and it was not possible for only one man to administer it. Yet he was alone, and he felt exclusive pleasure and satisfaction in serving his guru and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus his transcendental frustration and pleasure mingled, his will strengthened, and he continued alone.

His spiritual master, the previous spiritual masters, and the Vedic scriptures all assured him that he was right. If a person got a copy of the Bhāgavatam and read even one page, he might decide to take part in Lord Caitanya's movement. If a person seriously read the book, he would be convinced about spiritual life. The more this book could be distributed, the more the people could understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And if they understood Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they would become liberated from all problems. Bookselling was real preaching. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had wanted it, even at the neglect of constructing temples or making followers. Who could preach as well as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam? Certainly whoever spent sixteen rupees for a book would also take the time at least to look at it.

In the months that followed, Bhaktivedanta Swami received more favorable reviews. The prestigious Adyar Library Bulletin gave a full review, noting "the editor's vast and deep study of the subject" and concluding, "Further volumes of this publication are eagerly awaited."

His scholarly Godbrothers also wrote their appreciations. Swami Bon Mahārāja, rector of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy in Vṛndāvana, wrote:

I have nothing but admiration for your bold and practical venture. If you should be able to complete the whole work, you will render a very great service to the cause of Prabhupāda Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the country also. Do it and rest assured there will be no scarcity of resources.

Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja wrote a full review in his Sajjana-toṣaṇī.

We expect that this particular English version of Śrīmad Bhagwatam will be widely read and thereby spiritual poverty of people in general may be removed forever. At a time when we need it very greatly, Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swami has given us the right thing. We recommend this publication for everyone's serious study.

Sri Biswanath Das, governor of Uttar Pradesh, commended the volume to all thoughtful people. And Economic Review praised the author for attempting a tremendous task.

At a time when not only the people of India but those of the West need the chastening quality of love and truth in the corrupting atmosphere of hate and hypocrisy, a work like this will have uplifting and corrective influence.

Dr. Zakir Hussain, vice president of India, wrote:

I have read your book *Śrīmad Bhagwatam* with great interest and much profit. I thank you again for the kind thought which must have prompted you to present it to me.

The favorable reviews, although Bhaktivedanta Swami could not pay the printer with them, indicated a serious response; the book was valuable. And subsequent volumes would earn the series even more respect. By Kṛṣṇa's grace, Bhaktivedanta Swami had already completed many of the translations and purports for Volume Two. Even in the last weeks of printing the first volume, he had been writing day and night for the second volume. It was glorification of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and therefore it would require many, many volumes. He felt impelled to praise Kṛṣṇa and describe Him in more and more volumes. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said that the presses of the world could not print fast enough the glories of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual world that were being received at every moment by pure devotees.

Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to return to Vṛndāvana for several months of intensive writing on Volume Two. This was his real business at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. Vṛndāvana was the best place for writing transcendental literature; that had already been demonstrated by the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas of the past. Living in simple ease, taking little rest and food, he continually translated the verses and composed his Bhaktivedanta purports for Volume Two. After a few months, after amassing enough manuscript pages, he would return to Delhi and once again enter the world of publishing.

In Volume One he had covered the first six-and-a-half chapters of the First Canto. The second volume began on page 365 with the eighth verse of the Seventh Chapter. Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote in his purport that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was meant for paramahāṁsas, persons engaged purely in self-realization. "Yet," he wrote, "it works into the depth of the heart of those who may be worldly men. Worldly men are all engaged in the matter of sense gratification. But even such men also will find in this Vedic literature a remedial measure for their material diseases."

Bhaktivedanta Swami returned to Delhi to raise funds for printing Volume Two. When he visited a prospective donor, he would show the man Volume One and the growing collection of reviews, explaining that he was asking a donation not to support himself but to print this important literature. Although for the first volume he had received no donations equal to the four thousand rupees he had received from Mr. Poddar, an executive in the L & H Sugar factory gave a donation of five thousand rupees for Volume Two.

Bhaktivedanta Swami had been dissatisfied with Hitsaran Sharma as a production supervisor. Although supposedly an expert in the trade, Hitsaran had caused delays, and sometimes he had

advised Gautam Sharma without consulting Bhaktivedanta Swami. The work on Volume One had slowed and even stopped when a job from a cash customer had come up, and Bhaktivedanta Swami had complained that it was Hitsaran's fault for not giving money to O. K. Press on time. For Volume Two, Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to deal directly with O. K. Press and supervise the printing himself. He spoke to Gautam Sharma and offered a partial payment. Although the majority of the copies of Volume One were still standing on their printing floor, Bhaktivedanta Swami wanted O. K. Press to begin Volume Two. Gautam Sharma accepted the job.

It was early in 1964 when Volume Two went to press, following the same steps as Volume One. But this time Bhaktivedanta Swami was more actively present, pushing. To avoid delays, he purchased the paper himself. At Siddho Mal and Sons Paper Merchants, in the heart of the paper district, he would choose and order his paper and then arrange to transport it to O. K. Press. If the order was a large one he would have it carried by cart; smaller orders he would send by ricksha or on the head of a bearer.

In his Preface to the second volume, Bhaktivedanta Swami expressed the apparent oddity of working in Delhi while living in Vṛndāvana.

“The path of fruitive activities i.e. to say the path of earn money and enjoy life, as it is going on generally, appears to have become also our profession although we have renounced the order of worldly life! They see that we are moving in the cities, in the Government offices, banks and other business places for promoting the publication of Śrīmad Bhagwatam. They also see that we are moving in the press, paper market and amongst the book binders also away from our residence at Vrindaban, and thus they conclude sometimes mistakenly that we are also doing the same business in the dress of a mendicant!

“But actually there is a gulf of difference between the two kinds of activities. This is not a business for maintaining an establishment of material enjoyment. On the contrary it is an humble attempt to broadcast the glories of the Lord at a time when the people need it very badly.”

He went on to describe how in former days, even fifty years ago, well-to-do members of society had commissioned paṇḍitas to print or handwrite the Bhāgavatam and then distribute copies amongst the devotees and the general people. But times had changed. “At the present moment the time is so changed that we had to request one of the biggest industrialists of India, to purchase 100 (one hundred) copies and distribute them but the poor fellow expressed his inability. We wished that somebody may come forward to pay for the actual cost of publication of this Śrīmad Bhagwatam and let them be distributed free to all the leading gentlemen of the world. But nobody is so far prepared to do this social uplifting work.”

After thanking the Ministry of education and the director of education for distributing copies to institutions and libraries, Bhaktivedanta Swami again stated his predicament before his reading public. “The problem is that we must get some money for completing the work which is admittedly a mighty project. The sales proceeds are being employed in the promotional work and not in sense gratification. Herein lies the difference from the fruitive activities. And for all this we have to approach everyone concerned just like a businessman. There is no harm to become a businessman if it is done on account of the Lord as much as there was no harm to become a violent warrior like

Arjuna or Hanumanji if such belligerent activities are executed to satisfy the desires of the Supreme Lord.

“So even though we are not in the Himalayas, even though we talk of business, even though we deal in rupees and paisa, still, simply because we are 100 per cent servants of the Lord and are engaged in the service of broadcasting the message of His glories, certainly we shall transcend and get through the invincible impasse of Maya and reach the effulgent kingdom of God to render Him face to face eternal service, in full bliss and knowledge. We are confident of this factual position and we may also assure to our numerous readers that they will also achieve the same result simply by hearing the glories of the Lord.”

On receipt of the first copies of the second volume—another four-hundred-page, clothbound, brick-colored Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, with the same dust jacket as Volume One—Bhaktivedanta Swami made the rounds of the institutions, scholars, politicians, and booksellers. One Delhi bookseller, Dr. Manoharlal Jain, had particular success in selling the volumes.

Manoharlal Jain: He would come to me for selling his books. He would come often, and he used to chat with me for one or two hours. He had no other business except selling his books as much as possible. We would discuss the difficulties he was having and also many other things—yoga, Vedānta, and religious aspects of life. His problem was distributing his work, because it was a big publication. He had planned to publish it in many volumes. Naturally, I told him it was not possible for any individual bookseller or publisher here to publish it and invest money in it. So that was a little bit of a disappointment for him because he could not bring out more volumes.

But my sales were good because this was the best translation—Sanskrit text with English translations. No other such edition was available. I sold about one hundred and fifty to two hundred copies in about two or three years. The price was very little, only sixteen rupees. He had published his reviews, and he had a good sell, a good market. The price was reasonable, and he was not interested in making money out of it. He was printing in English, for the foreigners. He had a good command of Sanskrit as well as English. When we met, we would speak in English, and his English was very impressive.

He wanted me to publish, but I didn't have any presses and no finances. I told him frankly I would not be able to publish it, because it was not one or two volumes but many. But he managed anyhow. I referred him to Atmaram and Sons. He also used to go there.

He was a great master, a philosopher, a great scholar. I used to enjoy the talks. He used to sit with me for one or two hours, as much as he could afford. Sometimes he would come in the morning, eleven or twelve, and then sometimes in the afternoon. He used to come in for money: “How many copies are sold?” So I would pay him. Practically, he was not doing very well with finances at that time. He only wanted that his books should be sold to every library and everywhere where the people are interested in it.

We used to publish a catalog every month, and I would advertise his book. Orders would be coming from all over the world. So, at least for me, the sales were picking up. If I sold one hundred copies of the first volume, then I figured the second volume would be sold in the same number, naturally. But definitely those who would take the first volume would also take Volume Two, because it was institutional and the institutions will always try to complete their set. He used to discuss with me how the volumes can be brought out and how many it would take to complete the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He was very much interested in bringing out the whole series.

In January of 1964, Bhaktivedanta Swami was granted an interview with Indian vice president Zakir Hussain, who, although a Muslim, had written an appreciation of Bhaktivedanta Swami's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As Dr. Hussain cordially received the author at the presidential palace, Bhaktivedanta Swami spoke of the importance of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in the cause of love of Godhead. But Dr. Hussain wanted to know how love of Godhead could help humanity. The question, put by ruler to sādhu, was filled with philosophical implications, but the vice president's busy schedule of meetings did not permit Bhaktivedanta Swami to answer fully. For the vice president the interview was a gesture of appreciation, recognizing the Swami for his work on behalf of India's Hindu cultural heritage. And Bhaktivedanta Swami humbly accepted the ritual.

Later, however, he wrote Dr. Hussain a long letter, answering the question he had not had time to answer during their brief meeting. "... Mussalmans [Muslims] also admit," he wrote, "that 'There is nothing greater than Allah.' The Christians also admit that 'God is Great.'... The human society must learn to obey the laws of God." He reminded Dr. Hussain of India's great cultural asset the Vedic literature; the Indian government could perform the best welfare work for humanity by disseminating Vedic knowledge in a systematic way. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was "produced in India"; it was the substantial contribution India could offer to the world.

* * *

In March of 1964, Krishna Pandit, Bhaktivedanta Swami's sponsor at the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in Chippiwada, arranged for him to reside for a few months at the Śrī Rādhāvallabhajī temple in the nearby Rosanpura Naisarak neighborhood. There he could continue his writing and publishing, but he would also be giving a series of lectures. Krishna Pandit provided Bhaktivedanta Swami about fifteen hundred rupees for his maintenance. On Bhaktivedanta Swami's arrival at Śrī Rādhāvallabhajī temple, the manager distributed notices inviting people to "take full advantage of the presence of a Vaishnava Sadhu." As "resident ācārya," Bhaktivedanta Swami held morning and evening discourses at the temple, without reducing his activities of writing and printing.

* * *

In June, Bhaktivedanta Swami got the opportunity to meet Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. The meeting had been arranged by Doladram Khannah, a wealthy jeweler who was a trustee of the Chippiwada temple and had often met with Bhaktivedanta Swami there. An old friend of Prime Minister Shastri's since his youth, when they had attended the same yoga club, Mr. Khannah arranged the meeting as a favor to Bhaktivedanta Swami. Let the prime minister meet a genuine sādhu, Mr. Khannah thought.

It was a formal occasion in the gardens of the Parliament Building, and the prime minister was meeting a number of guests. Prime Minister Shastri, dressed in white kurtā and dhotī and a Nehru hat and surrounded by aides, received the elderly sādhu. Bhaktivedanta Swami, looking scholarly in his spectacles, stepped forward and introduced himself—and his book, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As he handed the prime minister a copy of Volume One, a photographer snapped a photo of the author and the prime minister smiling over the book.

The next day, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote to Prime Minister Shastri. He soon received a reply, personally signed by the prime minister:

Dear Swamiji, Many thanks for your Letter. I am indeed grateful to you for Presenting a copy of "Śrīmad Bhagawatam" to me. I do realise that you are doing valuable work. It would be good idea if the libraries in the Government Institutions purchase copies of this book.

Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote back to the prime minister, requesting him to buy books for Indian institutions. Mr. R. K. Sharma of the Ministry of Education subsequently wrote back, confirming that they would take fifty copies of Volume Two, just as they had taken Volume One.

* * *

To concentrate on completing Volume Three, Bhaktivedanta Swami returned to the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. These were the last chapters of the First Canto, dealing with the advent of the present Age of Kali. There were many verses foretelling society's degradation and narrating how the great King Parīkṣit had staved off Kali's influence by his strong Kṛṣṇa conscious rule. In his purports, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote that government could not check corruption unless it rooted out the four basic principles of irreligion—meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling. "You cannot check all these evils of society simply by statutory acts of police vigilance but you have to cure the disease of mind by the proper medicine namely advocating the principles of Brahminical culture or the principles of austerity, cleanliness, mercy, and truthfulness... We must always remember that false pride... undue attachment for woman or association with them and intoxicating habit of all... description will cripple the human civilisation from the path of factual peace, however the people may go on clamouring for such peace of the world."

To raise funds for Volume Three, Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to try Bombay. He traveled there in July and stayed at the Premkutir Dharmshala, a free āśrama.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: At Premkutir they received me very nicely. I was going to sell my books. Some of them were criticizing, "What kind of sannyāsī? He is making business bookselling." Not the authorities said this, but some of them. I was writing my book then also.

Then I became a guest for fifteen days with a member of the Dalmia family. One of the brothers told me that he wanted to construct a little cottage at his house: "You can live here. I will give you a nice cottage." I thought, "No, it is not good to be fully dependent and patronized by a viṣayī [materialist]." But I stayed for fifteen days, and he gave me exclusive use of a typewriter for writing my books.

Bhaktivedanta Swami made his rounds of the institutions and booksellers in Bombay. He now had an advertisement showing himself with Prime Minister Shastri, and he also had the prime minister's letter and the Ministry of Education's purchase order for fifty volumes. Still, he was getting only small orders.

Then he decided to visit Sumati Morarji, head of the Scindia Steamship Company. He had heard from his Godbrothers in Bombay that she was known for helping sādhus and had donated to the Bombay Gaudiya Math. He had never met her, but he well remembered the 1958 promise by one of her officers to arrange half-fare passage for him to America. Now he wanted her help for printing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

But his first attempts to arrange a meeting were unsuccessful. Frustrated at being put off by Mrs. Morarji's officers, he sat down on the front steps of her office building, determined to catch her attention as she left for the day. The lone sādhu certainly caused some attention as he sat quietly chanting for five hours on the steps of the Scindia Steamship Company building. Finally, late that afternoon, Mrs. Morarji emerged in a flurry of business talk with her secretary, Mr. Choksi. Upon seeing Bhaktivedanta Swami, she stopped. "Who is this gentleman sitting here?" she asked Mr. Choksi.

"He's been here for five hours," the secretary said.

"All right, I'll come," she said and walked up to where Bhaktivedanta Swami was sitting. He smiled and stood, offering namaskāras with his folded palms. "Swamiji, what can I do for you?" she said.

Bhaktivedanta Swami told her briefly of his intentions to print the third volume of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. "I want you to help me," he said.

"All right," Mrs. Morarji replied. "We can meet tomorrow, because it is getting late. Tomorrow you can come, and we will discuss."

The next day, Bhaktivedanta Swami met with Mrs. Morarji in her office, where she looked at the typed manuscript and the published volumes. "All right," she said, "if you want to print it, I will give you the aid. Whatever you want. You can get it printed."

With Mrs. Morarji's guarantee, Bhaktivedanta Swami was free to return to Vṛndāvana to finish writing the manuscript. As with the previous volumes, he set a demanding schedule for writing and publishing. The third volume would complete the First Canto. Then, with a supply of impressive literature, he would be ready to go to the West. Even with volumes One and Two he was getting a better reception in India. Already he had seen the vice president and prime minister. He had successfully approached a big business magnate of Bombay, and within a few minutes of presenting the book, he had received a large donation. The books were powerful preaching.

* * *

Janmāṣṭamī was drawing near, and Bhaktivedanta Swami was planning a celebration at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. He wanted to invite Biswanath Das, the governor of Uttar Pradesh, to preside

over the ceremony honoring Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance. Sri Biswanath had received a copy of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Volume One and had written a favorable review. Although a politician, he was known for his affection and respect for sādhus. He regularly invited recognized sādhus to his home, and once a year he would visit all the important temples of Mathurā and Vṛndāvana. Bhaktivedanta Swami asked Vṛndāvana's municipal president, Mangalal Sharma, to invite the governor to the Janmāṣṭamī celebration at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. The governor readily accepted the invitation.

Bhaktivedanta Swami printed a flyer announcing:

On the Occasion of JANMASTAMI ceremony at

The Samadhi ground of Śrīla Rupa and Jeeva Goswami

SRI SRI RADHA DAMODAR TEMPLE

Sebakunj, Vrindaban.

Goudiya Kirtan Performances

In the Presence of

His Excellency Sri Biswanath Das

GOVERNOR OF UTTAR PRADESH

&

The chief Guest SRI G. D. SOMANI of Bombay

Trustee of Sri Ranganathji Temple, Vrindaban.

Dated at Vrindaban Sunday the 31st August, 1964 at 7-30 to

8-30 p.m.

The flyer contained an advertisement for the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam series, to be completed in sixty volumes. Bhajanas to be sung on the occasion—"Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Prabhu," "Nītāi-pada-kamala," the "Prayers to the Six Gosvāmīs," and other favorite songs of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas—were printed in Bengali as a songbook.

The program was successful. A large crowd attended and sang songs to Lord Kṛṣṇa and took prasādam. Bhaktivedanta Swami lectured on a verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describing the Age of Kali as an ocean of faults that had but one saving quality: the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. After leading Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana, Bhaktivedanta Swami presented a copy of his second volume of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to the governor and spoke of his plans to preach all over the world.

The day after Janmāṣṭamī was Bhaktivedanta Swami's sixty-ninth birthday. A few days later, Biswanath Das requested Swami Mahārāja to visit him at his mansion in Lucknow. It was a special occasion, and the governor had invited several sādhus and planned a kīrtana program. He had invited a professional musical group who toured India performing kīrtanas and giving recitals. One of the musicians, young Sisir Kumar Bhattacharya, was very impressed with Bhaktivedanta Swami.

Sisir Bhattacharya: We were invited to perform kīrtana in the governor's house in Lucknow. We had about seven or eight in our group. This was the governor's house, a big home, and I was sitting on a dais. I saw the governor, Biswanath Das, and beside him was a sādhu who was old but I thought was really strong. When I saw the governor sitting there, I came down from the dais and bowed down. Then I asked which subject he wanted to listen to. He said, "Let's have something about Caitanya Mahāprabhu." Then I said, "I'm very glad you selected this." About one half hour we spent on Mahāprabhu's kīrtana, and then we had our dinner in the big banquet hall on all silver plates with the governor's symbols on each of them.

We sat together, and I was sitting side by side with the same sādhu, and he introduced himself as Bhaktivedanta Swami. We discussed, and then the Swami presented me with a book, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Bhaktivedanta Swami said, "I am interested to propagate kṛṣṇa-nāma and Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the Western countries. I am trying to get some way to find some ticket. If I get, I will go, and I will propagate Mahāprabhu's teachings." And he uttered this verse from Mahāprabhu: prṭhivīte āche yata nagarādi grām/ sarvatra pracār haibe mor nāma.* But I did not think he would actually be able to do it, because he was very simple and poor.

* * *

With the manuscript for Volume Three complete and with the money to print it, Bhaktivedanta Swami once again entered the printing world, purchasing paper, correcting proofs, and keeping the printer on schedule so that the book would be finished by January 1965. Thus, by his persistence, he who had almost no money of his own managed to publish his third large hardbound volume within a little more than two years.

At this rate, with his respect in the scholarly world increasing, he might soon become a recognized figure amongst his countrymen. But he had his vision set on the West. And with the third volume now printed, he felt he was at last prepared. He was sixty-nine and would have to go soon. It had been more than forty years since Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had first asked a young householder in Calcutta to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. At first it had seemed impossible to Abhay Charan, who had so recently entered family responsibilities. That obstacle, however, had long ago been removed, and for more than ten years he had been free to travel. But he had been penniless (and still was). And he had wanted first to publish some volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to take with him; it had seemed necessary if he were to do something solid. Now, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, three volumes were on hand.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I planned that I must go to America. Generally they go to London, but I did not want to go to London. I was simply thinking how to go to New York. I was scheming, "Whether I shall go this way, through Tokyo, Japan, or that way? Which way is cheaper?" That was my

proposal. And I was targeting to New York always. Sometimes I was dreaming that I have come to New York.

Then Bhaktivedanta Swami met Mr. Agarwal, a Mathurā businessman, and mentioned to him in passing, as he did to almost everyone he met, that he wanted to go to the West. Although Mr. Agarwal had known Bhaktivedanta Swami for only a few minutes, he volunteered to try to get him a sponsor in America. It was something Mr. Agarwal had done a number of times; when he met a sādhu who mentioned something about going abroad to teach Hindu culture, he would ask his son Gopal, an engineer in Pennsylvania, to send back a sponsorship form. When Mr. Agarwal volunteered to help in this way, Bhaktivedanta Swami urged him please to do so.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I did not say anything seriously to Mr. Agarwal, but perhaps he took it very seriously. I asked him, "Well, why don't you ask your son Gopal to sponsor so that I can go there? I want to preach there."

But Bhaktivedanta Swami knew he could not simply dream of going to the West; he needed money. In March 1965 he made another visit to Bombay, attempting to sell his books. Again he stayed at the free dharmaśālā, Premkutir. But finding customers was difficult. He met Paramananda Bhagwani, a librarian at Jai Hind College, who purchased books for the college library and then escorted Bhaktivedanta Swami to a few likely outlets.

Mr. Bhagwani: I took him to the Popular Book Depot at Grant Road to help him in selling books, but they told us they couldn't stock the books because they don't have much sales on religion. Then we went to another shop nearby, and the owner also regretted his inability to sell the books. Then he went to Sadhuvela, near Mahalakshmi temple, and we met the head of the temple there. He, of course, welcomed us. They have a library of their own, and they stock religious books, so we approached them to please keep a set there in their library. They are a wealthy āśrama, and yet he also expressed his inability.

Bhaktivedanta Swami returned to Delhi, pursuing the usual avenues of bookselling and looking for whatever opportunity might arise. And to his surprise, he was contacted by the Ministry of External Affairs and informed that his No Objection certificate for going to the U.S. was ready. Since he had not instigated any proceedings for leaving the country, Bhaktivedanta Swami had to inquire from the ministry about what had happened. They showed him the Statutory Declaration Form signed by Mr. Gopal Agarwal of Butler, Pennsylvania; Mr. Agarwal solemnly declared that he would bear the expenses of Bhaktivedanta Swami during his stay in the U.S.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Whatever the correspondence was there between the father and son, I did not know. I simply asked him, "Why don't you ask your son Gopal to sponsor?" And now, after three or four months, the No Objection certificate was sent from the Indian Consulate in New York to me. He had already sponsored my arrival there for one month, and all of a sudden I got the paper.

At his father's request, Gopal Agarwal had done as he had done for several other sādhus, none of whom had ever gone to America. It was just a formality, something to satisfy his father. Gopal had requested a form from the Indian Consulate in New York, obtained a statement from his employer certifying his monthly salary, gotten a letter from his bank showing his balance as of April 1965,

and had the form notarized. It had been stamped and approved in New York and sent to Delhi. Now Bhaktivedanta Swami had a sponsor. But he still needed a passport, visa, P-form, and travel fare.

The passport was not very difficult to obtain. Krishna Pandit helped, and by June 10 he had his passport. Carefully, he penned in his address at the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in Chippiwada and wrote his father's name, Gour Mohan De. He asked Krishna Pandit also to pay for his going abroad, but Krishna Pandit refused, thinking it against Hindu principles for a sādhu to go abroad—and also very expensive.

With his passport and sponsorship papers, Bhaktivedanta Swami went to Bombay, not to sell books or raise funds for printing; he wanted a ticket for America. Again he tried approaching Sumati Morarji. He showed his sponsorship papers to her secretary, Mr. Choksi, who was impressed and who went to Mrs. Morarji on his behalf. "The Swami from Vṛndāvana is back," he told her. "He has published his book on your donation. He has a sponsor, and he wants to go to America. He wants you to send him on a Scindia ship." Mrs. Morarji said no, the Swamiji was too old to go to the United States and expect to accomplish anything. As Mr. Choksi conveyed to him Mrs. Morarji's words, Bhaktivedanta Swami listened disapprovingly. She wanted him to stay in India and complete the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Why go to the States? Finish the job here.

But Bhaktivedanta Swami was fixed on going. He told Mr. Choksi that he should convince Mrs. Morarji. He coached Mr. Choksi on what he should say: "I find this gentleman very inspired to go to the States and preach something to the people there..." But when he told Mrs. Morarji, she again said no. The Swami was not healthy. It would be too cold there. He might not be able to come back, and she doubted whether he would be able to accomplish much there. People in America were not so cooperative, and they would probably not listen to him.

Exasperated with Mr. Choksi's ineffectiveness, Bhaktivedanta Swami demanded a personal interview. It was granted, and a gray-haired, determined Bhaktivedanta Swami presented his emphatic request: "Please give me one ticket."

Sumati Morarji was concerned. "Swamiji, you are so old—you are taking this responsibility. Do you think it is all right?"

"No," he reassured her, lifting his hand as if to reassure a doubting daughter, "it is all right."

"But do you know what my secretaries think? They say, 'Swamiji is going to die there.'"

Bhaktivedanta made a face as if to dismiss a foolish rumor. Again he insisted that she give him a ticket. "All right," she said. "Get your P-form, and I will make an arrangement to send you by our ship." Bhaktivedanta Swami smiled brilliantly and happily left her offices, past her amazed and skeptical clerks.

A "P-form"—another necessity for an Indian national who wants to leave the country—is a certificate given by the State Bank of India, certifying that the person has no excessive debts in India and is cleared by the banks. That would take a while to obtain. And he also did not yet have a

U.S. visa. He needed to pursue these government permissions in Bombay, but he had no place to stay. So Mrs. Morarji agreed to let him reside at the Scindia Colony, a compound of apartments for employees of the Scindia Company.

He stayed in a small, unfurnished apartment with only his trunk and typewriter. The resident Scindia employees all knew that Mrs. Morarji was sending him to the West, and some of them became interested in his cause. They were impressed, for although he was so old, he was going abroad to preach. He was a special sādhu, a scholar. They heard from him how he was taking hundreds of copies of his books with him, but no money. He became a celebrity at the Scindia Colony. Various families brought him rice, sabjī, and fruit. They brought so much that he could not eat it all, and he mentioned this to Mr. Choksi. Just accept it and distribute it, Mr. Choksi advised. Bhaktivedanta Swami then began giving remnants of his food to the children. Some of the older residents gathered to hear him as he read and spoke from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Mr. Vasavada, the chief cashier of Scindia, was particularly impressed and came regularly to learn from the sādhu. Mr. Vasavada obtained copies of Bhaktivedanta Swami's books and read them in his home.

Bhaktivedanta Swami's apartment shared a roofed-in veranda with Mr. Nagarajan, a Scindia office worker, and his wife.

Mrs. Nagarajan: Every time when I passed that way, he used to be writing or chanting. I would ask him, "Swamiji, what are you writing?" He used to sit near the window and one after another was translating the Sanskrit. He gave me two books and said, "Child, if you read this book, you will understand." We would have discourses in the house, and four or five Gujarati ladies used to come. At one of these discourses he told one lady that those who wear their hair parted on the side—that is not a good idea. Every Indian lady should have her hair parted in the center. They were very fond of listening and very keen to hear his discourse.

Every day he would go out trying to get his visa and P-form as quickly as possible, selling his books, and seeking contacts and supporters for his future Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam publishing. Mr. Nagarajan tried to help. Using the telephone directory, he made a list of wealthy business and professional men who were Vaiṣṇavas and might be inclined to assist. Bhaktivedanta Swami's neighbors at Scindia Colony observed him coming home dead tired in the evening. He would sit quietly, perhaps feeling morose, some neighbors thought, but after a while he would sit up, rejuvenated, and start writing.

Mrs. Nagarajan: When he came home we used to give him courage, and we used to tell him, "Swamiji, one day you will achieve your target." He would say, "Time is still not right. Time is still not right. They are all ajñānīs. They don't understand. But still I must carry on."

Sometimes I would go by, and his cādar would be on the chair, but he would be sitting on the windowsill. I would ask him, "Swamiji, did you have any good contacts?" He would say, "Not much today. I didn't get much, and it is depressing. Tomorrow Kṛṣṇa will give me more details." And he would sit there quietly.

After ten minutes, he would sit in his chair and start writing. I would wonder how Swamiji was so tired in one minute and in another minuteñ Even if he was tired, he was not defeated. He would

never speak discouragement. And we would always encourage him and say, "If today you don't get it, tomorrow you will definitely meet some people, and they will encourage you." And my friends used to come in the morning and in the evening for discourse, and they would give namaskāra and fruits.

Mr. Nagarajan: His temperament was very adjustable and homely. Our friends would offer a few rupees. He would say, "All right. It will help." He used to walk from our colony to Andheri station. It is two kilometers, and he used to go there without taking a bus, because he had no money.

Bhaktivedanta Swami had a page printed entitled "My Mission," and he would show it to influential men in his attempts to get further financing for Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The printed statement proposed that God consciousness was the only remedy for the evils of modern materialistic society. Despite scientific advancement and material comforts, there was no peace in the world; therefore, Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the glory of India, must be spread all over the world.

Mrs. Morarji asked Bhaktivedanta Swami if he would read Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to her in the evening. He agreed. She began sending her car for him at six o'clock each evening, and they would sit in her garden, where he would recite and comment on the Bhāgavatam.

Mrs. Morarji: He used to come in the evening and sing the verses in rhythmic tunes, as is usually done with the Bhāgavatam. And certain points—when you sit and discuss, you raise so many points—he was commenting on certain points, but it was all from the Bhāgavatam. So he used to sit and explain to me and then go. He could give time, and I could hear him. That was for about ten or fifteen days.

His backing by Scindia and his sponsorship in the U.S. were a strong presentation, and with the help of the people at Scindia he obtained his visa on July 28, 1965. But the P-form proceedings went slowly and even threatened to be a last, insurmountable obstacle.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Formerly there was no restriction for going outside. But for a sannyāsī like me, I had so much difficulty obtaining the government permission to go out. I had applied for the P-form sanction, but no sanction was coming. Then I went to the State Bank of India. The officer was Mr. Martarchari. He told me, "Swamiji, you are sponsored by a private man. So we cannot accept. If you were invited by some institution, then we could consider. But you are invited by a private man for one month. And after one month, if you are in difficulty, there will be so many obstacles." But I had already prepared everything to go. So I said, "What have you done?" He said, "I have decided not to sanction your P-form." I said, "No, no, don't do this. You better send me to your superior. It should not be like that."

So he took my request, and he sent the file to the chief official of foreign exchange—something like that. So he was the supreme man in the State Bank of India. I went to see him. I asked his secretary, "Do you have such-and-such a file. You kindly put it to Mr. Rao. I want to see him." So the secretary agreed, and he put the file, and he put my name down to see him. I was waiting. So Mr. Rao came personally. He said, "Swamiji, I passed your case. Don't worry."

Following Mrs. Morarji's instruction, her secretary, Mr. Choksi, made final arrangements for Bhaktivedanta Swami. Since he had no warm clothes, Mr. Choksi took him to buy a wool jacket and other woolen clothes. Mr. Choksi spent about 250 rupees on new clothes, including some new dhotis. At Bhaktivedanta Swami's request, Mr. Choksi printed five hundred copies of a small pamphlet containing the eight verses written by Lord Caitanya and an advertisement for Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, in the context of an advertisement for the Scindia Steamship Company.

Mr. Choksi: I asked him, "Why couldn't you go earlier? Why do you want to go now to the States, at this age?" He replied that, "I will be able to do something good, I am sure." His idea was that someone should be there who would be able to go near people who were lost in life and teach them and tell them what the correct thing is. I asked him so many times, "Why do you want to go to the States? Why don't you start something in Bombay or Delhi or Vṛndāvana?" I was teasing him also: "You are interested in seeing the States. Therefore, you want to go. All Swamijis want to go to the States, and you want to enjoy there." He said, "What I have got to see? I have finished my life."

But sometimes he was hot-tempered. He used to get angry at me for the delays. "What is this nonsense?" he would say. Then I would understand: he is getting angry now. Sometimes he would say, "Oh, Mrs. Morarji has still not signed this paper? She says come back tomorrow, we will talk tomorrow! What is this? Why this daily going back?" He would get angry. Then I would say, "You can sit here." But he would say, "How long do I have to sit?" He would become impatient.

Finally Mrs. Morarji scheduled a place for him on one of her ships, the Jaladuta, which was sailing from Calcutta on August 13. She had made certain that he would travel on a ship whose captain understood the needs of a vegetarian and a brāhmaṇa. Mrs. Morarji told the Jaladuta's captain, Arun Pandia, to carry extra vegetables and fruits for the Swami. Mr. Choksi spent the last two days with Bhaktivedanta Swami in Bombay, picking up the pamphlets at the press, purchasing clothes, and driving him to the station to catch the train for Calcutta.

He arrived in Calcutta about two weeks before the Jaladuta's departure. Although he had lived much of his life in the city, he now had nowhere to stay. It was as he had written in his "Vṛndāvana-bhajana": "I have my wife, sons, daughters, grandsons, everything, / But I have no money, so they are a fruitless glory." Although in this city he had been so carefully nurtured as a child, those early days were also gone forever: "Where have my loving father and mother gone to now? / And where are all my elders, who were my own folk? / Who will give me news of them, tell me who? / All that is left of this family life is a list of names."

Out of the hundreds of people in Calcutta whom Bhaktivedanta Swami knew, he chose to call on Mr. Sisir Bhattacharya, the flamboyant kīrtana singer he had met a year before at the governor's house in Lucknow. Mr. Bhattacharya was not a relative, not a disciple, nor even a close friend; but he was willing to help. Bhaktivedanta Swami called at his place and informed him that he would be leaving on a cargo ship in a few days; he needed a place to stay, and he would like to give some lectures. Mr. Bhattacharya immediately began to arrange a few private meetings at friends' homes, where he would sing and Bhaktivedanta Swami would then speak.

Mr. Bhattacharya thought the sādhu's leaving for America should make an important news story. He accompanied Bhaktivedanta Swami to all the newspapers in Calcutta—the Hindustan Standard, the

Amrita Bazar Patrika, the Jugantas, the Statesman, and others. Bhaktivedanta Swami had only one photograph, a passport photo, and they made a few copies for the newspapers. Mr. Bhattacharya would try to explain what the Swami was going to do, and the news writers would listen. But none of them wrote anything. Finally they visited the Dainik Basumati, a local Bengali daily, which agreed to print a small article with Bhaktivedanta Swami's picture.

A week before his departure, on August 6, Bhaktivedanta Swami traveled to nearby Māyāpur to visit the samādhi of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Then he returned to Calcutta, where Mr. Bhattacharya continued to assist him with his final business and speaking engagements.

Mr. Bhattacharya: We just took a hired taxi to this place and that place. And he would go for preaching. I never talked to him during the preaching, but once when I was coming back from the preaching, I said, "You said this thing about this. But I tell you it is not this. It is this." I crossed him in something or argued. And he was furious. Whenever we argued and I said, "No, I think this is this," then he was shouting. He was very furious. He said, "You are always saying, 'I think, I think, I think.' What is the importance of what you think? Everything is what you think. But it doesn't matter. It matters what śāstra says. You must follow." I said, "I must do what I think, what I feel—that is important." He said, "No, you should forget this. You should forget your desire. You should change your habit. Better you depend on śāstras. You follow what śāstra wants you to do, and do it. I am not telling you what I think, but I am repeating what the śāstra says."

As the day of his departure approached, Bhaktivedanta Swami took stock of his meager possessions. He had only a suitcase, an umbrella, and a supply of dry cereal. He did not know what he would find to eat in America; perhaps there would be only meat. If so, he was prepared to live on boiled potatoes and the cereal. His main baggage, several trunks of his books, was being handled separately by Scindia Cargo. Two hundred three-volume sets—the very thought of the books gave him confidence.

When the day came for him to leave, he needed that confidence. He was making a momentous break with his previous life, and he was dangerously old and not in strong health. And he was going to an unknown and probably unwelcoming country. To be poor and unknown in India was one thing. Even in these Kali-yuga days, when India's leaders were rejecting Vedic culture and imitating the West, it was still India; it was still the remains of Vedic civilization. He had been able to see millionaires, governors, the prime minister, simply by showing up at their doors and waiting. A sannyāsī was respected; the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was respected. But in America it would be different. He would be no one, a foreigner. And there was no tradition of sādhus, no temples, no free āśramas. But when he thought of the books he was bringing—transcendental knowledge in English—he became confident. When he met someone in America he would give him a flyer: "“Śrīmad Bhagwatam,' India's Message of Peace and Goodwill."

It was August 13, just a few days before Janmāṣṭamī, the appearance day anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa—the next day would be his own sixty-ninth birthday. During these last years, he had been in Vṛndāvana for Janmāṣṭamī. Many Vṛndāvana residents would never leave there; they were old and at peace in Vṛndāvana. Bhaktivedanta Swami was also concerned that he might die away from Vṛndāvana. That was why all the Vaiṣṇava sādhus and widows had taken vows not to leave, even for Mathurā—because to die in Vṛndāvana was the perfection of life. And the Hindu tradition was

that a sannyāsī should not cross the ocean and go to the land of the mlecchas. But beyond all that was the desire of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and his desire was nondifferent from that of Lord Kṛṣṇa. And Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu had predicted that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa would be known in every town and village of the world.

Bhaktivedanta Swami took a taxi down to the Calcutta port. A few friends and admirers, along with his son Vrindavan, accompanied him. He writes in his diary: "Today at 9 a.m. embarked on M.V. Jaladuta. Came with me Bhagwati, the Dwarwan of Scindia Sansir, Mr. Sen Gupta, Mr. Ali and Vrindaban." He was carrying a Bengali copy of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, which he intended to read during the crossing. Somehow he would be able to cook on board. Or if not, he could starve—whatever Kṛṣṇa desired. He checked his essentials: passenger ticket, passport, visa, P-form, sponsor's address. Finally it was happening.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: With what great difficulty I got out of the country! Some way or other, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, I got out so I could spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. Otherwise, to remain in India—it was not possible. I wanted to start a movement in India, but I was not at all encouraged.

The black cargo ship, small and weathered, was moored at dockside, a gangway leading from the dock to the ship's deck. Indian merchant sailors curiously eyed the elderly saffron-dressed sādhu as he spoke last words to his companions and then left them and walked determinedly toward the boat.

For thousands of years, kṛṣṇa-bhakti had been known only in India, not outside, except in twisted, faithless reports by foreigners. And the only swamis to have reached America had been nondevotees, Māyāvādī impersonalists. But now Kṛṣṇa was sending Bhaktivedanta Swami as His emissary.

SPL 12: The Journey to America

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Journey to America

Today the ship is plying very smoothly. I feel today better. But I am feeling separation from Sri Vrindaban and my Lords Sri Govinda, Gopinath, Radha Damodar. My only solace is Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita in which I am tasting the nectarine of Lord Chaitanya's lila. I have left Baharatabhumi just to execute the order of Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, in pursuance of Lord Chaitanya's order. I have no qualification, but have taken up the risk just to carry out the order of His Divine Grace. I depend fully on Their mercy, so far away from Vrindaban.

—Jaladuta diary

September 10, 1965

The Jaladuta is a regular cargo carrier of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company, but there is a passenger cabin aboard. During the voyage from Calcutta to New York in August and September of 1965, the cabin was occupied by "Sri Abhoy Charanaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami," whose age was listed as sixty-nine and who was taken on board bearing "a complimentary ticket with food."

The Jaladuta, under the command of Captain Arun Pandia, whose wife was also aboard, left at 9:00 A.M. on Friday, August 13. In his diary, Śrīla Prabhupāda noted: "The cabin is quite comfortable, thanks to Lord Sri Krishna for enlightening Sumati Morarji for all these arrangements. I am quite comfortable." But on the fourteenth he reported: "Seasickness, dizziness, vomiting—Bay of Bengal. Heavy rains. More sickness."

On the nineteenth, when the ship arrived at Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Prabhupāda was able to get relief from his seasickness. The captain took him ashore, and he traveled around Colombo by car. Then the ship went on toward Cochin, on the west coast of India. Janmāṣṭamī, the appearance day of Lord Kṛṣṇa, fell on the twentieth of August that year. Prabhupāda took the opportunity to speak to the crew about the philosophy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and he distributed prasādam he had cooked himself. August 21 was his seventieth birthday, observed (without ceremony) at sea. That same day the ship arrived at Cochin, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's trunks of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam volumes, which had been shipped from Bombay, were loaded on board.

By the twenty-third the ship had put out to the Red Sea, where Śrīla Prabhupāda encountered great difficulty. He noted in his diary: "Rain, seasickness, dizziness, headache, no appetite, vomiting." The symptoms persisted, but it was more than seasickness. The pains in his chest made him think he would die at any moment. In two days he suffered two heart attacks. He tolerated the difficulty, meditating on the purpose of his mission, but after two days of such violent attacks he thought that if another were to come he would certainly not survive.

On the night of the second day, Prabhupāda had a dream. Lord Kṛṣṇa, in His many forms, was rowing a boat, and He told Prabhupāda that he should not fear, but should come along. Prabhupāda felt assured of Lord Kṛṣṇa's protection, and the violent attacks did not recur.

The Jaladuta entered the Suez Canal on September 1 and stopped in Port Sa'id on the second. Śrīla Prabhupāda visited the city with the captain and said that he liked it. By the sixth he had recovered a little from his illness and was eating regularly again for the first time in two weeks, having cooked his own kicharī and purīs. He reported in his diary that his strength renewed little by little.

Thursday, September 9

To 4:00 this afternoon, we have crossed over the Atlantic Ocean for twenty-four hours. The whole day was clear and almost smooth. I am taking my food regularly and have got some strength to struggle. There is also a slight tacking of the ship and I am feeling a slight headache also. But I am struggling and the nectarine of life is Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita, the source of all my vitality.

Friday, September 10

Today the ship is plying very smoothly. I feel today better. But I am feeling separation from Sri Vrindaban and my Lords Sri Govinda, Gopinath, Radha Damodar. The only solace is Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita in which I am tasting the nectarine of Lord Chaitanya's lila [pastimes]. I have left Bharatabhumi just to execute the order of Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati in pursuance of Lord Chaitanya's order. I have no qualification, but have taken up the risk just to carry out the order of His Divine Grace. I depend fully on Their mercy, so far away from Vrindaban.

During the voyage, Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes stood on deck at the ship's rail, watching the ocean and the sky and thinking of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Vṛndāvana-dhāma, and the order of his spiritual master to go preach in the West. Mrs. Pandia, the captain's wife, whom Śrīla Prabhupāda considered to be "an intelligent and learned lady," foretold Śrīla Prabhupāda's future. If he were to pass beyond this crisis in his health, she said, it would indicate the good will of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The ocean voyage of 1965 was a calm one for the Jaladuta. The captain said that never in his entire career had he seen such a calm Atlantic crossing. Prabhupāda replied that the calmness was Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy, and Mrs. Pandia asked Prabhupāda to come back with them so that they might have another such crossing. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in his diary, "If the Atlantic would have shown its usual face, perhaps I would have died. But Lord Krishna has taken charge of the ship."

On September 13, Prabhupāda noted in his diary: "Thirty-second day of journey. Cooked bati kichari. It appeared to be delicious, so I was able to take some food. Today I have disclosed my mind to my companion, Lord Śrī Krishna. There is a Bengali poem made by me in this connection."

This poem was a prayer to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and it is filled with Prabhupāda's devotional confidence in the mission that he had undertaken on behalf of his spiritual master. An English translation of the opening stanzas follows:*

I emphatically say to you, O brothers, you will obtain your good fortune from the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa only when Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī becomes pleased with you.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who is very dear to Lord Gaurāṅga [Lord Caitanya], the son of mother Śacī, is unparalleled in his service to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is that great, saintly spiritual master who bestows intense devotion to Kṛṣṇa at different places throughout the world.

By his strong desire, the holy name of Lord Gaurāṅga will spread throughout all the countries of the Western world. In all the cities, towns, and villages on the earth, from all the oceans, seas, rivers, and streams, everyone will chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

As the vast mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu conquers all directions, a flood of transcendental ecstasy will certainly cover the land. When all the sinful, miserable living entities become happy, the Vaiṣṇavas' desire is then fulfilled.

Although my Guru Mahārāja ordered me to accomplish this mission, I am not worthy or fit to do it. I am very fallen and insignificant. Therefore, O Lord, now I am begging for Your mercy so that I may become worthy, for You are the wisest and most experienced of all...

The poem ends:

Today that remembrance of You came to me in a very nice way. Because I have a great longing I called to You. I am Your eternal servant, and therefore I desire Your association so much. O Lord Kṛṣṇa, except for You there is no means of success.

In the same straightforward, factual manner in which he had noted the date, the weather, and his state of health, he now described his helpless dependence on his “companion, Lord Krishna,” and his absorption in the ecstasy of separation from Kṛṣṇa. He described the relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple, and he praised his own spiritual master, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, “by whose strong desire the holy name of Lord Gaurāṅga will spread throughout all the countries of the Western world.” He plainly stated that his spiritual master had ordered him to accomplish this mission of worldwide Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and feeling unworthy he prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa for strength. The last verses give an unexpected, confidential glimpse into Śrīla Prabhupāda's direct relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda called on Kṛṣṇa as his “dear friend” and longed for the joy of again wandering the fields of Vraja. This memory of Kṛṣṇa, he wrote, came because of a great desire to serve the Lord. Externally, Śrīla Prabhupāda was experiencing great inconvenience; he had been aboard ship for a month and had suffered heart attacks and repeated seasickness. Moreover, even if he were to recover from these difficulties, his arrival in America would undoubtedly bring many more difficulties. But remembering the desire of his spiritual master, taking strength from his reading of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, and revealing his mind in his prayer to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda remained confident.

After a thirty-five-day journey from Calcutta, the Jaladuta reached Boston's Commonwealth Pier at 5:30 A.M. on September 17, 1965. The ship was to stop briefly in Boston before proceeding to New York City. Among the first things Śrīla Prabhupāda saw in America were the letters “A & P” painted on a pierfront warehouse. The gray waterfront dawn revealed the ships in the harbor, a conglomeration of lobster stands and drab buildings, and, rising in the distance, the Boston skyline.

Prabhupāda had to pass through U.S. Immigration and Customs in Boston. His visa allowed him a three-month stay, and an official stamped it to indicate his expected date of departure. Captain Pandia invited Prabhupāda to take a walk into Boston, where the captain intended to do some shopping. They walked across a footbridge into a busy commercial area with old churches, warehouses, office buildings, bars, tawdry bookshops, nightclubs, and restaurants. Prabhupāda briefly observed the city, but the most significant thing about his short stay in Boston, aside from the fact that he had now set foot in America, was that at Commonwealth Pier he wrote another Bengali poem, entitled “Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma” (“Teaching Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in America”). Some of the verses he wrote on board the ship that day are as follows:*

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are so kind upon this useless soul, but I do not know why You have brought me here. Now You can do whatever You like with me.

But I guess You have some business here, otherwise why would You bring me to this terrible place?

Most of the population here is covered by the material modes of ignorance and passion. Absorbed in material life they think themselves very happy and satisfied, and therefore they have no taste for the transcendental message of Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa]. I do not know how they will be able to understand it.

But I know that Your causeless mercy can make everything possible, because You are the most expert mystic.

How will they understand the mellows of devotional service? O Lord, I am simply praying for Your mercy so that I will be able to convince them about Your message.

All living entities have come under the control of the illusory energy by Your will, and therefore, if You like, by Your will they can also be released from the clutches of illusion.

I wish that You may deliver them. Therefore if You so desire their deliverance, then only will they be able to understand Your message...

How will I make them understand this message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? I am very unfortunate, unqualified, and the most fallen. Therefore I am seeking Your benediction so that I can convince them, for I am powerless to do so on my own.

Somehow or other, O Lord, You have brought me here to speak about You. Now, my Lord, it is up to You to make me a success or failure, as You like.

O spiritual master of all the worlds! I can simply repeat Your message. So if You like You can make my power of speaking suitable for their understanding.

Only by Your causeless mercy will my words become pure. I am sure that when this transcendental message penetrates their hearts, they will certainly feel gladdened and thus become liberated from all unhappy conditions of life.

O Lord, I am just like a puppet in Your hands. So if You have brought me here to dance, then make me dance, make me dance, O Lord, make me dance as You like.

I have no devotion, nor do I have any knowledge, but I have strong faith in the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. I have been designated as Bhaktivedanta, and now, if You like, You can fulfill the real purport of Bhaktivedanta.

Signed—the most unfortunate, insignificant beggar,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami,

On board the ship Jaladuta, Commonwealth Pier,

Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Dated 18th September 1965.

He was now in America. He was in a major American city, rich with billions, populated with millions, and determined to stay the way it was. Prabhupāda saw Boston from the viewpoint of a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. He saw the hellish city life, people dedicated to the illusion of material happiness. All his dedication and training moved him to give these people the transcendental knowledge and saving grace of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, yet he was feeling weak, lowly, and unable to help them on his own. He was but “an insignificant beggar” with no money. He had barely survived the two heart attacks at sea, he spoke a different language, he dressed strangely—yet he had come to tell people to give up meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling, and to teach them to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa, who to them was a mythical Hindu god. What would he be able to accomplish?

Helplessly he spoke his heart directly to God: “I wish that You may deliver them. I am seeking Your benediction so that I can convince them.” And for convincing them he would trust in the power of God's holy name and in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. This transcendental sound would clean away desire for material enjoyment from their hearts and awaken loving service to Kṛṣṇa. On the streets of Boston, Prabhupāda was aware of the power of ignorance and passion that dominated the city; but he had faith in the transcendental process. He was tiny, but God was infinite, and God was Kṛṣṇa, his dear friend.

On the nineteenth of September the Jaladuta sailed into New York Harbor and docked at a Brooklyn pier, at Seventeenth Street. Śrīla Prabhupāda saw the awesome Manhattan skyline, the Empire State Building, and, like millions of visitors and immigrants in the past, the Statue of Liberty.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was dressed appropriately for a resident of Vṛndāvana. He wore kanthi-mālā (neck beads) and a simple cotton dhotī, and he carried japa-mālā (chanting beads) and an old chādar, or shawl. His complexion was golden, his head shaven, śikhā in the back, his forehead decorated with the whitish Vaiṣṇava tilaka. He wore pointed white rubber slippers, not uncommon for sādhus in India. But who in New York had ever seen or dreamed of anyone appearing like this Vaiṣṇava? He was possibly the first Vaiṣṇava sannyāsī to arrive in New York with uncompromised appearance. Of course, New Yorkers have an expertise in not giving much attention to any kind of strange new arrival.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was on his own. He had a sponsor, Mr. Agarwal, somewhere in Pennsylvania. Surely someone would be here to greet him. Although he had little idea of what to do as he walked off the ship onto the pier—“I did not know whether to turn left or right”—he passed through the dockside formalities and was met by a representative from Traveler's Aid, sent by the Agarwals in Pennsylvania, who offered to take him to the Scindia ticket office in Manhattan to book his return passage to India.

At the Scindia office, Prabhupāda spoke with the ticket agent, Joseph Foerster, who was impressed by this unusual passenger's Vaiṣṇava appearance, his light luggage, and his apparent poverty. He regarded Prabhupāda as a priest. Most of Scindia's passengers were businessmen or families, so Mr. Foerster had never seen a passenger wearing the traditional Vaiṣṇava dress of India. He found Śrīla

Prabhupāda to be “a pleasant gentleman” who spoke of “the nice accommodations and treatment he had received aboard the *Jaladuta*.” Prabhupāda asked Mr. Foerster to hold space for him on a return ship to India. His plans were to leave in about two months, and he told Mr. Foerster that he would keep in touch. Carrying only forty rupees cash, which he himself called “a few hours’ spending in New York,” and an additional twenty dollars he had collected from selling three volumes of the *Bhāgavatam* to Captain Pandia, Śrīla Prabhupāda, with umbrella and suitcase in hand, and still escorted by the Traveler’s Aid representative, set out for the Port Authority Bus Terminal to arrange for his trip to Butler.

SPL 13: Butler, Pennsylvania: The First Testing Ground

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Butler, Pennsylvania:

The First Testing Ground

By the grace of Lord Krishna, the Americans are prosperous in every respect. They are not poverty stricken like the Indians. The people in general are satisfied so far as their material needs are concerned, and they are spiritually inclined. When I was in Butler, Pennsylvania, about five hundred miles from New York City, I saw there many churches, and they were attending regularly. This shows that they are spiritually inclined. I was also invited by some churches and church governed schools and colleges, and I spoke there, and they appreciated it and presented me some token rewards. When I was speaking to the students, they were very eager to hear about the principles of Śrīmad Bhagwatam. But the clergymen were cautious about allowing students to hear me so patiently. They feared that the students might be converted to Hindu ideas—as is quite natural for any religious sect. But they do not know that devotional service of the Lord Sri Krishna is the common religion for everyone, including even the aborigines and cannibals in the jungle.

—from a letter to Sumati Morarji

The bus came swinging out of the terminal into the daylight of mid-town Manhattan, riding along in the shadows of skyscrapers, through asphalt streets crowded with people, trucks, and automobiles and into the heavy traffic bound toward the Lincoln Tunnel. The bus entered the tunnel and emerged on the Jersey side of the Hudson River, continuing down the New Jersey Turnpike past fields of huge oil tanks and sprawling refineries. The Manhattan skyline was on the left, while three lanes of traffic sped sixty miles an hour in each direction. Newark Airport came up close by on the right, with jets visible on the ground. Electric power lines, spanning aloft between steel towers, stretched into the horizon.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had never before witnessed anything of such magnitude. He was now seeing for himself that American culture was based on passion for more and more sense gratification—and it was a scene of madness. For what important business were people rushing to and fro at breakneck speed? He could see their goals advertised on the billboards.

Of course, he had many times traveled the road from Delhi to Vṛndāvana, but it did not have many advertisements. A traveler would see mostly the land, roadside streams, temples, homes, farmers in their fields. Most people went on foot or traveled by oxcart or bicycle. And in Vṛndāvana even the ordinary passersby greeted each other by calling the names of God: "Jaya Rādhe!" "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" Now there were factories outside Delhi, but nothing like this. The cumulative effect did not pack nearly the materialistic punch of these fields of oil tanks, mammoth factories, and billboards alongside the crowded superhighway. Meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling—the very sins Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to preach against—were proudly glamorized on mile after mile of billboards. The signs promoted liquor and cigarettes, roadside restaurants offered slaughtered cows in the form of steaks and hamburgers, and no matter what the product, it was usually advertised by a lusty-looking woman. But Prabhupāda had come to teach the opposite: that happiness is not found in the passion for sense gratification, and that only when one becomes detached from the mode of passion, which leads to sinful acts, can one become eligible for the eternal happiness of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda felt compassion. The compassion of a Kṛṣṇa conscious saint had been explained in an age long ago by Prahlāda Mahārāja: "I see that there are many saintly persons indeed, but they are interested only in their own deliverance. Not caring for the big cities and towns, they go to the Himalayas or the forests to meditate with vows of silence. They are not interested in delivering others. As for me, however, I do not wish to be liberated alone, leaving aside all these poor fools and rascals. I know that without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without taking shelter of Your lotus feet, one cannot be happy. Therefore I wish to bring them back to shelter at Your lotus feet."

The scenery gradually changed to the Pennsylvania countryside, and the bus sped through long tunnels in the mountains. Night came. And it was late—after eleven—when the bus entered the heavily industrialized Pittsburgh area on the shore of the Allegheny River. Śrīla Prabhupāda couldn't see the steel mills clearly, but he could see their lights and their industrial fires and smoking stacks. Millions of lights shone throughout the city's prevailing dinginess.

When the bus finally pulled into the terminal, it was past midnight. Gopal Agarwal was waiting with the family Volkswagen bus to drive Prabhupāda to Butler, about one hour north. He greeted Prabhupāda with folded palms and "Welcome, Swamiji," bowing from the waist several times.

This was not any of Gopal's doing. His father, a Mathurā businessman with a fondness for sādhus and religious causes, had requested him to host the Swamiji. This wasn't the first time his father had arranged for a sādhu acquaintance to come to America. Several times he had sent sponsorship papers for Gopal to sign, and Gopal had obediently done so—but nothing had ever come of them. So when the sponsorship letter for A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami had come, Gopal had promptly signed and returned it, thinking that this would be the last they would hear of it. But then just a week ago a letter had come. Sally Agarwal had opened it and then, in alarm, called to her husband: "Honey, sit down. Listen to this: the Swami is coming." Śrīla Prabhupāda had enclosed his picture so that they would not mistake him. The Agarwals had looked curiously at the photograph. "There'll be no mistake there," Gopal had said.

The unsuspecting Agarwals were "simple American people," according to Sally Agarwal, who had met her Indian husband while he was working as an engineer in Pennsylvania. What would they do

with an Indian swami in their house? Prabhupāda was a shock for them. But there was no question of not accepting him; they were bound by the request of Gopal's father. Dutifully, Gopal had purchased Śrīla Prabhupāda's ticket from New York to Pittsburgh and had arranged for the agent from Traveler's Aid to meet him. And dutifully he had driven tonight to meet him. So it was with a mixture of embarrassment, disbelief, and wonder that Gopal Agarwal helped his guest into the VW and drove back home to Butler.

* * *

September 20

"BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA, HOME OF THE JEEP" read a granite plaque in the city park. Butler, famous as the town where the U.S. Army jeep was invented in 1940, was an industrial city of twenty thousand settled amid the hills of an area rich in oil, coal, gas, and limestone. Its industry consisted mainly of factories for plate glass, railroad cars, refrigerators, oil equipment, and rubber goods. Ninety percent of the local laborers were native Americans. The nominal religion had always been Christian, mostly Protestant with some Catholic, and in later years a few synagogues had appeared. But there was no Hindu community at that time; Gopal Agarwal was the first Indian to move to Butler.

As the VW bus pulled into town, the predawn air was warm and humid. The morning edition of the Butler Eagle would soon be going to the newsstands—"Red Chinese Fire on India"; "Prime Minister Shastri Declares Chinese Communists Out to Dominate World"; "United Nations Council Demands Pakistan and India Cease-fire in 48 hours."

Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived at the Agarwals' home—Sterling Apartments—at 4:00 A.M., and Gopal invited him to sleep on the couch. Their place, a townhouse apartment, consisted of a small living room, a dining room, a kitchenette, two upstairs bedrooms, and a bath. Here they lived with their two young children. The Agarwals had lived in Butler for a few years now and felt themselves established in a good social circle. Since their apartment had so little space, they decided that it would be better if the Swami took a room at the YMCA and came to visit them during the day. Of course, living space wasn't the real difficulty—it was him. How would he fit into the Butler atmosphere? He was their guest, so they would have to explain him to their friends and neighbors.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was immediately a curiosity for whoever saw him. In anxiety, Mrs. Agarwal decided that instead of having people speculate about the strange man in orange robes living at her house, it would be better to let them know about him from the newspapers. She explained her plan to Prabhupāda, who laughed, understanding that he didn't fit in.

Sally hurried off to a Pittsburgh newspaper office, but the interviewer wasn't able to comprehend why this person should make an interesting story. Sally then took him to the local Butler Eagle, where his presence was accepted as indeed newsworthy.

September 22

A feature article appeared in the Butler Eagle: "In fluent English, Devotee of Hindu Cult Explains Commission to Visit the West." A photographer had come to the Agarwals' apartment and had taken a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda standing in the living room holding an open volume of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The caption read, "Ambassador of Bhakti-yoga."

The article began:

A slight brown man in faded orange drapes and wearing white bathing shoes stepped out of a compact car yesterday and into the Butler YMCA to attend a meeting. He is A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swamiji, a messenger from India to the peoples of the West.

The article referred to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam as "Biblical literature" and to Śrīla Prabhupāda as "the learned teacher." It continued:

"My mission is to revive a people's God consciousness," says the Swamiji. "God is the Father of all living beings, in thousands of different forms," he explains. "Human life is a stage of perfection in evolution; if we miss the message, back we go through the process again," he believes... Bhakti vedanta lives as a monk, and permits no woman to touch his food. On a six-week ocean voyage and at the Agarwal apartment in Butler he prepares his meals in a brass pan with separate levels for steaming rice, vegetables, and making "bread" at the same time. He is a strict vegetarian, and is permitted to drink only milk, "the miracle food for babies and old men," he noted... If Americans would give more attention to their spiritual life, they would be much happier, he says.

The Agarwals had their own opinion as to why Prabhupāda had come to America: "to finance his books," and nothing more. They were sure that he was hoping only to meet someone who could help him with the publication of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and that he did not want any followers. At least they hoped he wouldn't do anything to attract attention; and they felt that this was his mentality also. "He didn't create waves," Sally Agarwal says. "He didn't want any crowd. He didn't want anything. He only wanted to finance his books." Perhaps Prabhupāda, seeing their nervousness, agreed to keep a low profile, out of consideration for his hosts.

At Prabhupāda's request, however, Mr. Agarwal held a kind of open house in his apartment every night from six to nine.

Sally: It was quite an intellectual group that we were in, and they were fascinated by him. They hardly knew what to ask him. They didn't know enough. This was just like a dream out of a book. Who would expect to meet a swami in someone's living room in Butler, Pennsylvania? It was just really tremendous. In the middle of middle-class America. My parents came from quite a distance to see him. We knew a lot of people in Pittsburgh, and they came up. This was a very unusual thing, having him here. But the real interest shown in him was only as a curiosity.

He had a typewriter, which was one of his few possessions, and an umbrella. That was one of the things that caused a sensation, that he always carried an umbrella. And it was a little chilly and he was balding, so he always wore this hat that someone had made for him, like a swimming cap. It was a kind of sensation. And he was so brilliant that when he saw someone twice, he knew who

they were—he remembered. He was a brilliant man. Or if he met them in our apartment and saw them in a car, he would remember their name, and he would wave and say their name. He was a brilliant man. All the people liked him. They were amazed at how intelligent he was. The thing that got them was the way he remembered their name. And his humorous way. He looked so serious all the time, but he was a very humorous person. He was forbidding in his looks, but he was very charming.

He was the easiest guest I have had in my life, because when I couldn't spend time with him he chanted, and I knew he was perfectly happy. When I couldn't talk to him, he chanted. He was so easy, though, because I knew he was never bored. I never felt any pressure or tension about having him. He was so easy that when I had to take care of the children he would just chant. It was so great. When I had to do things, he would just be happy chanting. He was a very good guest. When the people would come, they were always smoking cigarettes, but he would say, "Pay no attention. Think nothing of it." That's what he said. "Think nothing of it." Because he knew we were different. I didn't smoke in front of him. I knew I wasn't supposed to smoke in front of Gopal's father, so I sort of considered him the same. He didn't make any problems for anybody.

One evening a guest asked Prabhupāda, "What do you think of Jesus Christ?" And Prabhupāda replied, "He is the Son of God." Then he added that he—the guest—was also a son of God. Everyone was interested to hear that the Swami accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Gopal: His intent was not to have you change your way of life. He wasn't telling anybody they should be vegetarian or anything. All he wanted you to do was to follow what you are, but be better. He didn't stress that we should give up many things.

Śrīla Prabhupāda followed a regulated daily schedule. Every morning he would walk the six or seven blocks from the YMCA to Sterling Apartments, arriving there about seven. When he had first landed in New York, he had in his luggage a large bundle of dried cereal, similar to rolled oats. This supply was enough for several weeks, and every morning at breakfast he would take some with milk. At seven forty-five Gopal would leave for work, and around nine-thirty Prabhupāda would start preparing his lunch in the kitchen. He made his capātīs by hand, without even a rolling pin. He worked alone for two hours, while Mrs. Agarwal did housework and took care of her children. At eleven-thirty he took prasādam.

Sally: When he cooked he used only one burner. The bottom-level pot created the steam. He had the dāl on the bottom, and it created the steam to cook many other vegetables. So for about a week he was cooking this great big lunch, which was ready about eleven-thirty, and Gopal always came home for lunch about twelve. I used to serve Gopal a sandwich, and then he would go back to work. But it didn't take me long to realize that the food the Swami was cooking we'd enjoy too, so he started cooking that noon meal for all of us. Oh, and we enjoyed it so much.

Our fun was to show him what we knew of America. And he had never seen such things. It was such fun to take him to the supermarket. He loved opening the package of okra or frozen beans, and he didn't have to clean them and cut them and do all those things. He opened the freezer every day and just chose his items. It was fun to watch him. He sat on the couch while I swept with the

vacuum cleaner, and he was so interested in that, and we talked for a long time about that. He was so interesting.

So every day he'd have this big feast, and everything was great fun. We really enjoyed it. I would help him cut the things. He would spice it, and we would laugh. He was the most enjoyable man, most enjoyable man. I really felt like a sort of daughter to him, even in such a short time. Like he was my father-in-law. He was friend of my father-in-law, but I really felt very close to him. He enjoyed everything. I liked him. I thought he was tremendous.

After lunch, Prabhupāda would leave, about 1:00 P.M., and walk to the YMCA, where the Agarwals figured he must have worked at his writing until five. He would come back to their apartment about six in the evening, after they had taken their meal. They ate meat, so Mrs. Agarwal was careful to have it cleared away before he came. When one night he came early, she said, "Oh, Swamiji, we have just cooked meat, and the smell will be very disagreeable to you." But he said, "Oh, think nothing of it. Think nothing of it."

In the evening he would speak with guests. The guests would usually take coffee and other refreshments, but he would request a glass of warm milk at nine o'clock. He would stay, speaking until nine-thirty or ten, and then Mr. Agarwal would drive him back to the YMCA.

Prabhupāda would also do his own laundry every day. He washed his clothes in the Agarwals' bathroom and hung them to dry outside. He sometimes accompanied the Agarwals to the laundromat and was interested to see how Americans washed and dried their clothes. To Sally he seemed "very interested in the American ways and people."

Sally: Our boy Brij was six or seven months old when the Swami came—and the Indians love boys. The Swami liked Brij. He was there when Brij first stood. The first time Brij made the attempt and actually succeeded, the Swami stood up and clapped. It was a celebration. Another time, our baby teethed on the Swami's shoes. I thought, "Oh, those shoes. They've been all over India, and my kid is chewing on them." You know how a mother would feel.

Almost every night he used to sit in the next-door neighbor's backyard. We sat out there sometimes with him, or we stayed in the living room. One time something happened with our little girl, Pamela, who was only three years old. I used to take her to Sunday school, and she learned about Jesus in Sunday school. Then when she would see Swamiji with his robes on and everything, she called him Swami Jesus. And this one time when it first dawned on us what she was saying, she called him Swami Jesus, and Swami smiled and said, "And a little child shall lead them." It was so funny.

Prabhupāda spoke to various groups in the community. He spoke at the Lions Club in early October and received a formal document:

Be it known that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami was a guest at the Lions Club of Butler, Pa., and as an expression of appreciation for services rendered, the Club tenders this acknowledgment.

He also gave a talk at the Y and at St. Fidelis Seminary College in Herman, Pennsylvania, and he spoke regularly to guests at the Agarwal home.

* * *

When Professor Larsen, the chairman of the philosophy department at Slippery Rock State College, read in the Butler Eagle of a visiting Indian swami and Vedic scholar, he phoned the Agarwals' home to invite Prabhupāda to lecture on campus.

Allen Larsen: I called the number given in the newspaper article, but it turned out that the Swamiji was actually staying in a room at the YMCA. When I arrived, he was waiting on the street corner, and I picked him up. He seemed very much alone. When we were driving to Slippery Rock, I asked him to pronounce his name for me so I would have it right when I introduced him to my class. He said, "Swamiji Bhaktivedanta," and then he proceeded to tell me what that meant. Since I was not used to Indian names, he had to repeat it several times before I got it right. He showed no impatience with my slowness. Even at this early junction of our association, I was convinced that this man had an inner stability and strength that would be very difficult to shake, and this initial impression was further reinforced throughout the rather busy day.

A hundred students from several classes had gathered to hear the lecture, as Prabhupāda, in his natural, unrehearsed manner, walked down the aisle, up the three wooden steps, and onto the plain wooden stage. He sat down, erect and cross-legged, and began softly singing Hare Kṛṣṇa, his eyes closed. Then he stood and spoke (without a lectern or microphone) and answered questions from the audience. The program lasted only fifty minutes and ended abruptly with a bell signaling the next class.

Allen Larsen: After the first class, I had a short conversation with the Swamiji while sitting outside on a bench on the campus lawn. Most of the time when he was not directly engaged in conversation he would repeat a short prayer while moving prayer beads through his fingers. He was sitting up cross-legged, and we were speaking back and forth. He said that the trees around us were beautiful, and he asked, "What kind of trees are these?" I replied, "They're shade trees." Then he said that it was too bad they weren't fruit or nut trees to provide food and benefit people.

At one o'clock Prabhupāda lectured again. Afterward, he accompanied Dr. Mohan Sharma, a member of the faculty who had attended the lecture, and his sixteen-year-old daughter, Mini, to Dr. Sharma's campus residence. Prabhupāda accepted warm milk and dried fruit, and at Dr. Sharma's request, blessed his home and touched the forehead of his daughter in a gesture of benediction. Around three o'clock, Professor Larsen drove him back to Butler.

Allen Larsen: The Swamiji seemed to present himself as an Indian scholar who had come for a short time to do translation work. I never thought of him as a missionary. But during the course of the day there grew in me a warm affection for this man, because he was unmistakably a good man who had found his way to a stability and peace that is very rare.

The lectures in Pennsylvania gave Prabhupāda his first readings of how his message would be received in America. At Commonwealth Pier in Boston he had stated in his poem: "I am sure that

when this transcendental message penetrates their hearts, they will certainly feel gladdened and thus become liberated from all unhappy conditions of life." Now this principle was actually being tested in the field. Would they be able to understand? Were they interested? Would they surrender?

* * *

October 15

Śrīla Prabhupāda received a letter from Sumati Morarji in Bombay:

Poojya Swami,

I am in due receipt of your letter dated the 24th ultimo, and glad to know that you have safely reached the U.S.A. after suffering from seasickness. I thank you for your greetings and blessings. I know by now you must have recovered fully from the sickness and must be keeping good health. I was delighted to read that you have started your activities in the States and have already delivered some lectures. I pray to Lord Bala Krishna to give you enough strength to enable you to carry the message of Sri Bhagwatam. I feel that you should stay there until you fully recover from your illness and return only after you have completed your mission.

Here everything is normal. With respects,

Yours sincerely,

Sumati Morarji

Prabhupāda regarded the last line of this letter as especially significant: his well-wisher was urging him to stay in America until he had completed his mission. He had told the immigration officials in New York that he would be staying in America for two months. "I have one month's sponsorship in Butler," he thought, "and then I have no support. So perhaps I can stay another month." So he had said two months. Sumati Morarji, however, was urging him to stay on. He saw that the prospects for preaching to the Americans were good, but he felt he would need support from India.

At any rate, he had spent long enough in Butler, and he now had one month left in America. So he decided to go to New York City and try to preach there, before his time was up. But first he wanted to visit Philadelphia, where he had arranged a meeting with a Sanskrit professor, Dr. Norman Brown, at the University of Pennsylvania.

Mrs. Agarwal was sorry to see him go.

Sally: After a month I really loved the Swami. I felt protective in a way, and he wanted to go to Philadelphia. But I couldn't imagine—I told him—I could not imagine him going to Philadelphia for two days. He was going to speak there, and then to New York. But he knew no one in New York. If the thing didn't pan out in Philadelphia, he was just going to New York, and then there was no one. I just couldn't imagine. It made me sick.

I remember the night he was leaving, about two in the morning. I remember sitting there as long as he could wait before Gopal took him to Pittsburgh to get on that bus. Gopal got a handful of change, and I remember telling him how to put the money in the slot so that he could take a bath at the bus station—because he was supposed to take a bath a few times a day. And Gopal told him how to do that, and told him about the automats in New York. He told him what he could eat and what he couldn't eat, and he gave him these coins in a sock, and that's all he left us with.

As a sannyāsī, Śrīla Prabhupāda was used to picking up and leaving one place for another. As a mendicant preacher, he had no remorse about leaving behind the quiet life of the Butler YMCA. And he had no attachment for the domestic habitat where he would cook and talk with Sally Agarwal about vacuum cleaners, frozen foods, and American ways.

But why had he gone to Butler? And why was he going to New York? He saw it as Kṛṣṇa's grace. As a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, he wanted to be an instrument for distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

His stay in Butler had been helpful. He had gotten first-hand experience of American life, and he gained confidence that his health was strong and his message communicable. He was glad to see that America had the necessary ingredients for his Indian vegetarian diet, and that the people could understand his English. He had learned that casual onetime lectures here and there were of limited value, and that although there would be opposition from the established religions, people individually were very much interested in what he had to say.

On October 18, he left Butler, via Philadelphia, for New York City.

SPL 14: Struggling Alone

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Struggling Alone

I used to sit in the back and listen to his meetings silently. He was speaking all impersonal nonsense, and I kept my silence. Then one day he asked if I would like to speak, and I spoke about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I challenged that he was speaking manufactured philosophy and all nonsense from Śaṅkarācārya. He tried to back out and said he was not speaking, Śaṅkarācārya was speaking. I said, "You are representing him. That is the same thing." He then said to me, "Swamiji, I like you very much, but you cannot speak here." But although our philosophies differed and he would not let me speak, he was kind, and I was nice to him.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda in conversation

Prabhupāda knew no one in New York City, but he had a contact: Dr. Ramamurti Mishra. He had written Dr. Mishra from Butler, enclosing the letter of introduction Paramananda Mehra had given him in Bombay. He had also phoned Dr. Mishra, who welcomed Prabhupāda to join him in New York.

At the Port Authority Bus Terminal, a student of Dr. Mishra's met him as he arrived from Philadelphia and escorted him directly to an Indian festival in the city. There Prabhupāda met Dr. Mishra as well as Ravi Shankar and his brother, the dancer Uday Shankar. Prabhupāda then accompanied Dr. Mishra to his apartment at 33 Riverside Drive, beside the Hudson River. The apartment was on the fourteenth floor and had large windows overlooking the river. Dr. Mishra gave Prabhupāda a room to himself.

Dr. Mishra was a dramatic, showy personality, given to flashing glances and making expressive gestures with his hands. He regularly used words like "lovely" and "beautiful." Presenting an artfully polished image of what a guru should be, he was what some New Yorkers referred to as "an uptown swami." Before coming to America, Dr. Mishra had been a Sanskrit scholar and a guru, as well as a doctor. He had written a number of books, such as *The Textbook of Yoga Psychology and Self-Analysis and Self-Knowledge*, a work based on the teachings of the monistic philosopher Śaṅkara. After he came to the United States, he continued with his medical profession, but as he began taking disciples he gradually dropped his practice. Although a sannyāsī, he did not wear the traditional saffron dhotī and kurtā, but instead wore tailored Nehru jackets and white slacks. His complexion was dark, whereas Prabhupāda's was golden, and he had thick, black hair. At forty-four, he was young enough to be Prabhupāda's son. Dr. Mishra had been suffering from bad health when Śrīla Prabhupāda came into his life, and Prabhupāda's arrival seemed the perfect medicine.

Ramamurti Mishra: His Holiness Prabhupāda Bhaktivedanta Gosvāmījī really knocked me down with love. He was really an incarnation of love. My body had become a skeleton, and he really brought me back to life—his cooking, and especially his love and his devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. I was very lazy in the matter of cooking, but he would get up and have ready.

Dr. Mishra appreciated that Prabhupāda, cooking with the precision of a chemist, would prepare many dishes, and that he had a gusto for eating.

Ramamurti Mishra: It was not bread he gave me—he gave me prasādam. This was life, and he saved my life. At that time I was not sure I would live, but his habit to eat on time, whether I was hungry or not—that I very much liked. He'd get up and say, "All right, this is bhagavat-prasādam," and I would say, "All right."

Joan Suval, an old student of Dr. Mishra's, often saw Śrīla Prabhupāda and her teacher together at the Riverside Drive apartment.

Joan Suval: I have a memory of Swamiji as a child, in the sense of his being very innocent, a very simple person, very pure. The impression I have from Dr. Mishra is that he regarded Swamiji as a father figure who was kindly and good. But basically the words most often used referring to Swamiji were "like a child," meaning that he was simple in a classical, beautiful sense. Dr. Mishra mentioned to me when I was first introduced to Swamiji that he was a very holy man, very religious, rapt in God consciousness.

Swamiji was very sweet. I myself remember him as a very, very good man, even in the practical details of living in New York, which seemed to involve him very much, because he was a practical man and was looking for the best place to begin his work. I remember very well that he was always

Careful about washing his clothes out every night. I would come in and find a group of students in the living area of Dr. Mishra's apartment, and in the bathroom would be hung Swamiji's orange robes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda would sometimes discuss with Dr. Mishra the aim of his visit to America, expressing his spiritual master's vision of establishing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. He requested Dr. Mishra to help him, but Dr. Mishra would always refer to his own teaching work, which kept him very busy, and to his plans for leaving the country soon. After a few weeks, when it became inconvenient to maintain Prabhupāda at the apartment, Dr. Mishra shifted him to his haṭha-yoga studio on the fifth floor of 100 West Seventy-second Street, near Central Park. The large studio was located in the center of the building and included an office and an adjoining private room, where Prabhupāda stayed. It had no windows.

Philosophically at complete odds with Prabhupāda, Dr. Mishra accepted the Absolute Truth in the impersonal feature (or Brahman) to be supreme. Prabhupāda stressed the supremacy of the personal feature (or Bhagavān), following the Vedic theistic philosophy that the most complete understanding of the Absolute Truth is personal. The Bhagavad-gītā says that the impersonal Brahman is subordinate to Bhagavān and is an emanation from Him, just as the sunshine is an emanation from the sun planet. This conclusion had been taught by the leading traditional ācāryas of ancient India, such as Rāmānuja and Madhva, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was in disciplic succession from Madhva. Dr. Mishra, on the other hand, followed Śaṅkara, who taught that the impersonal presence of the Absolute Truth is all in all and that the Personality of Godhead is ultimately an illusion. Whereas Prabhupāda's theistic philosophy accepted the individual spiritual self (ātmā) as an eternal servant of the supreme spiritual being (Bhagavān), Dr. Mishra's view accepted the spiritual self as not an individual. Rather, his idea was that since each person is identical with God, the Supreme Brahman, there is no need to worship God outside oneself. As Dr. Mishra would put it, "Everything is one."

Prabhupāda challenged: If each of us is actually the Supreme, then why is this "Supreme" suffering and struggling in the material world? Dr. Mishra would counter that the Supreme is only temporarily covered by illusion and that through haṭha-yoga and meditation one would become enlightened, understanding, "It is all the Supreme." Prabhupāda would again challenge: But if the Supreme could be covered by illusion, then illusion would be greater than God, greater than the Supreme.

Prabhupāda considered Dr. Mishra a "Māyāvādī" because of his inadvertent acceptance that māyā, illusion, is greater than the Absolute Truth. For Śrīla Prabhupāda, not only was the impersonal philosophy unpalatable, it was an insult to the Personality of Godhead. According to Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-gītā (7.24, 9.11), "Unintelligent men, who know Me not, think that I have assumed this form and personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My higher nature, which is changeless and supreme... Fools deride Me when I appear in this human form. They do not know My transcendental nature and My supreme dominion over all that be." Lord Caitanya had also strongly refuted the Māyāvāda philosophy: "Everything about the Supreme Personality of Godhead is spiritual, including His body, opulence, and paraphernalia. Māyāvāda philosophy, however, covers His spiritual opulence and advocates the theory of impersonalism."

Before coming to America, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written in his Bhāgavatam purports, “The ambitious Māyāvādī philosophers desire to merge into the existence of the Lord. This form of mukti (liberation) means denying one's individual existence. In other words, it is a kind of spiritual suicide. It is absolutely opposed to the philosophy of bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga offers immortality to the individual conditioned soul. If one follows the Māyāvāda philosophy, he misses his opportunity to become immortal after giving up the material body.” In the words of Lord Caitanya, māyāvādī kṛṣṇa-aparādhī: “Māyāvādī impersonalists are great offenders unto Lord Kṛṣṇa.” Thus Lord Caitanya had concluded that if one even hears the commentary of Śaṅkara, one's entire spiritual life is spoiled. Dr. Mishra was content to align himself with the philosophy of Śaṅkara and allow Prabhupāda to stay with Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Bhagavad-gītā. But Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out that even Śaṅkara accepted that the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, or Nārāyaṇa, exists eternally beyond the material world. Therefore, He is a transcendental person—nārāyaṇah paro 'vyaktāt.

A mendicant, Prabhupāda was temporarily dependent on the good will of his Māyāvādī acquaintance, with whom he regularly ate and conversed and from whom he accepted shelter. But what a great inconvenience it was! He had come to America to speak purely and boldly about Kṛṣṇa, but he was being restricted. In Butler he had been confined by his hosts' middle-class sensibilities; now he was silenced in a different way. He was treated with kindness, but he was considered a threat. Dr. Mishra could not allow his students to hear the exclusive praise of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Spending most of his time in his new room, Śrīla Prabhupāda kept at his typing and translating. But when Dr. Mishra held his yoga classes, Prabhupāda would sometimes come out and lead a kīrtana or lecture.

Robert Nelson (one of Prabhupāda's first young sympathizers in New York): I went to Dr. Mishra's service, and Dr. Mishra talked. Swamiji was sitting on a bench, and then all of a sudden Dr. Mishra stops the service and he gets a big smile and says, “Swamiji will sing us a song.” I think Dr. Mishra wouldn't let him speak. Somebody told me Dr. Mishra didn't want him to preach.

Every morning, several hours before dawn, Prabhupāda would rise, take his bath, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa on his beads, and work at his translating, while outside his closed-in, windowless chamber, dawn came and the city awoke. He had no stove, so daily he had to walk the seven blocks to the Riverside Drive apartment to cook. It would be late morning when he would come out onto the busy street. He would walk north on Columbus Avenue amid the steady flow of pedestrians, pausing at each intersection in the sweeping breeze from the river. Instead of the small-town scenery of Butler, he passed through the rows of thirty-story office buildings on Columbus Avenue. At street level were shoe repair shops, candy stores, laundries, and continental restaurants. The upper stories held the professional suites of doctors, dentists, and lawyers. At Seventy-fifth Street, he would turn west and walk through a neighborhood of brownstone apartments and then across Amsterdam to Broadway, with its center-island park. The greenery here could more accurately be described as “blackery,” since it was covered with soot and city grime. Broadway displayed its produce shops and butcher shops, with their stands extending onto the sidewalk, and old men sat on benches in the thin strip of park between the northbound and southbound traffic. The last block on Seventy-fifth before Riverside Drive held high-rise apartment buildings with doormen standing. Thirty-three Riverside Drive also had a doorman.

Sometimes Prabhupāda would walk in Riverside Park. Still careful for the condition of his heart, he liked the long stretches of flat walking area. Sometimes he would walk from Dr. Mishra's studio down Seventy-second Street to Amsterdam Avenue, to the West End Superette, where he would buy produce and spices for his cooking. Sometimes he would wander through Manhattan, without any fixed direction, and sometimes he would take buses to different areas of the city.

On weekends, Prabhupāda would accompany Dr. Mishra to his Ananda Ashram, one hour north of the city, in Monroe, New York. Joan Suval, who used to drive them, would overhear their animated conversations in the back seat of her car. Although they spoke in Hindi, she could hear their discussions turn into loud, shouting arguments; and afterward they would again become friends.

At Ananda Ashram Prabhupāda would usually hold kīrtana, with Dr. Mishra's students joining him in the chanting, and even in dancing. Dr. Mishra was particularly fond of Prabhupāda's chanting.

Ramamurti Mishra: I have never seen or met any devotee who sang so much. And his kīrtana was just ambrosial. If you pay attention and become relaxed, that voice has very electrical vibrations on your heart. You cannot avoid it. Ninety-nine percent of the students, whether they liked it or not, got up and danced and chanted. And I felt very blessed to meet such a great soul.

Harvey Cohen (a visitor to Ananda Ashram): Everyone got up early and went to morning meditation. Dr. Mishra was dressed in a golden Indian-style jacket, and his students were already deeply into it when I entered the room. All the cushions were taken, so I picked a spot in the back of the room where I could lean against the wall to facilitate my meditation. Seated at one side was an older Indian man in saffron cloth and wrapped in a pinkish wool blanket. He seemed to be muttering to himself, and I later discovered that he was praying. It was Swami Bhaktivedanta. His forehead was painted with a white V-shaped sign, and his eyes were half shut. He seemed very serene.

Harvey tried, but he couldn't do the rāja-yoga. He was new to Ananda Ashram and had only come up for a weekend retreat. During his morning meditation, he found himself more attracted to the green mists above the lake outside the window than to the circle on the wall he was supposed to be meditating on.

Harvey: I went to my room. The rain was increasing and beating against the windows. It was peaceful, and I was glad to be alone. I read for a while. Suddenly I sensed someone standing in the doorway. Looking up, I saw it was the Swami. He was wrapped in his pink blanket, like a shawl. "Can I come in?" he asked. I nodded yes, and he asked if he could sit in the chair in the corner. "What are you reading?" He smiled. "Kafka's Diaries," I replied feeling a little embarrassed. "Uh," he said, and I put the book down. He asked what I was doing at the āśrama and if I was interested in yoga. "What kind of yoga are you studying?" "I don't know much about it," I answered, "but I think I'd like to study hatha yoga." This didn't impress him. "There are better things than this," he explained. "There are higher, more direct forms of yoga. Bhakti-yoga is the highest—it is the science of devotion to God."

As he spoke, I got the overpowering realization that he was right. He was speaking the truth. A creepy ecstatic sensation came over me that this man was my teacher. His words were so simple. And I kept looking at him all weekend. He would sit so calm and dignified with warmth. And he asked me to visit him when we got back to the city.

Dr. Mishra would give lectures carrying the impersonal interpretation of Bhagavad-gītā according to Śāṅkara, and Prabhupāda, when allowed to speak, would counter them. Once Prabhupāda asked Dr. Mishra to help him in spreading Lord Caitanya's movement, but Dr. Mishra sidestepped Prabhupāda by saying that he considered Prabhupāda an incarnation of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and therefore not in need of help. Prabhupāda replied that since "Mishra" was also the name of Lord Caitanya's father, Dr. Mishra should help spread Lord Caitanya's movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda offered to engage him in checking the Sanskrit to his translations of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, but Dr. Mishra declined—a decision he later regretted.

Hurta Lurch (a student at Ananda Ashram): My direct encounter with him was in the kitchen. He was very particular and very definite that he would only eat what he cooked himself. He would come and say, "Get me a pot." So when I brought him a pot, he'd say, "No, bigger." So I brought a bigger pot, and he'd say, "No, smaller." Then he would say, "Get me potato," so I'd bring him a potato. He prepared food very, very quietly. He never spoke very much. He prepared potatoes and then some vegetables and then capātīs. After cooking, he would eat outside. He would usually cook enough to go around for Dr. Mishra and about five or six other people. Every day he would cook that much when he was there. I learned to make capātīs from him. He usually stayed only for the weekends and then went back to the city. I think he felt that was where his main work was to be done.

* * *

That was certainly true, but what could he do there with no money or support? He was thinking of staying for only a few weeks and then going back to India. In the meantime, he was working on his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam manuscripts, walking in Manhattan, and writing letters. He was studying a new culture, calculating practically and imagining hopefully how to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the Western world. He expressed his thoughts to Sumati Morarji:

October 27

So far as I have studied, the American people are very much eager to learn about the Indian way of spiritual realization, and there are so many so-called yoga ashrams in America. Unfortunately, they are not very much adored by the government, and it is learned that such yoga ashrams have exploited the innocent people, as has been the case in India also. The only hope is that they are spiritually inclined, and immense benefit can be done to them if the cult of Śrīmad Bhagwatam is preached here...

Śrīla Prabhupāda noted that the Americans were also giving a good reception to Indian art and music. "Just to see the mode of reception," he attended the performance of a Madras dancer, Bala Saraswati.

I went to see the dance with a friend, although for the last forty years I have never attended such dance ceremonies. The dancer was successful in her demonstration. The music was in Indian classical tune, mostly in Sanskrit language, and the American public appreciated them. So I was encouraged to see the favorable circumstances about my future preaching work.

He said the Bhāgavatam could also be preached through music and dance, but he had no means to introduce it. The Christian missions, backed by huge resources, were preaching all over the world, so why couldn't the devotees of Kṛṣṇa combine to preach the Bhāgavatam all over the world? He also noted that the Christian missions had not been effective in checking the spread of Communism, whereas a Bhāgavatam movement could be, because of its philosophical, scientific approach.

He was deliberately planting a seed of inspiration in the mind of the devoted, wealthy Sumati Morarji.

November 8

Prabhupāda wrote to his Godbrother Tirtha Mahārāja, who had become president of the Gaudiya Math, to remind him that their spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, had a strong desire to open preaching centers in the Western countries. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had several times attempted to do this by sending sannyāsīs to England and other European countries, but, Prabhupāda noted, "without any tangible results. "

I have come to this country with the same purpose in view, and as far as I can see, here in America there is very good scope for preaching the cult of Lord Chaitanya...

Prabhupāda pointed out that there were certain Māyāvādī groups who had buildings but were not attracting many followers. But he had talked with Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, who had given the opinion that the Americans were suitable for bhakti-yoga.

I am here and see a good field for work, but I am alone, without men and money. To start a center here, we must have our own buildings...

If the leaders of the Gaudiya Math would consider opening their own branch in New York, Śrīla Prabhupāda would be willing to manage it. But without their own house, he reported, they could not conduct a mission in the city. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that they could open centers in many cities throughout the country if his Godbrothers would cooperate. He repeatedly made the point that although other groups did not have the genuine spiritual philosophy of India, they were buying many buildings. The Gaudiya Math, however, had nothing.

If you agree to cooperate with me as I have suggested above, then I shall extend my visa period. My present visa period ends by the end of this November. But if I receive your confirmation immediately, then I shall extend my visa period. Otherwise, I shall return to India.

* * *

November 9

(6:00 P.M.)

While Prabhupāda sat alone in his fifth-floor room in Dr. Mishra's yoga studio, the lights suddenly went out. This was his experience of the first moments of the New York City blackout of 1965. In India, power failure occurred commonly, so Prabhupāda, while surprised to find the same thing in America, remained undisturbed. He began chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on his beads. Meanwhile, outside his room, the entire New York metropolitan area had been plunged into darkness. The massive power failure had suddenly left the entire city without electricity, trapping 800,000 people in the subways and affecting more than 30,000,000 people in nine states and three Canadian provinces.

Two hours later, a man from Dr. Mishra's apartment arrived at the door with candles and some fruit. He found Prabhupāda in a pleasant mood, sitting there in the darkness chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. The man informed him of the serious nature of such a blackout in New York City; Prabhupāda thanked him and returned again to his chanting. The blackout lasted until 7:00 the next morning.

Śrīla Prabhupāda received a reply to his letter of November 8 to Tīrtha Mahārāja in Calcutta. Prabhupāda had explained his hopes and plans for staying in America, but he had stressed that his Godbrothers would have to give him their vote of confidence as well as some tangible support. His Godbrothers had not been working cooperatively. Each leader was interested more in maintaining his own building than in working with the others to spread the teachings of Lord Caitanya around the world. So how would it be possible for them to share Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision of establishing a branch in New York City? They would see it as his separate attempt. Yet despite the unlikely odds, he appealed to their missionary spirit and reminded them of the desires of their spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Their Guru Mahārāja wanted Kṛṣṇa consciousness to be spread in the West. But when Prabhupāda finally got Tīrtha Mahārāja's reply, he found it unfavorable. His Godbrother did not argue against his attempting something in New York, but he politely said that the Gaudiya Math funds could not be used for such a proposal.

Prabhupāda replied, "It is not very encouraging, still I'm not a man to be disappointed." In fact, he found a little hope in Tīrtha Mahārāja's reply, so he described to his Godbrother the property he had recently found for sale at 143 West Seventy-second Street. The building, only eighteen-and-a-half feet wide and one hundred feet deep, consisted of the first-floor store, a basement, and a mezzanine. Prabhupāda presented Tīrtha Mahārāja the price—\$100,000 with a \$20,000 cash down payment—and remarked that this building was twice the size of their Research Institute in Calcutta. Prabhupāda conceived of the basement as a kitchen and dining area, the first floor as a lecture hall, and the mezzanine as personal apartments, with a separate area for the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Appropriately, Prabhupāda had described himself as "a man not to be disappointed." He was convinced that if there were a center where people could come hear from a pure devotee, the genuine God conscious culture of India could begin in America. Yet because he had made his plans dependent on obtaining an expensive building in Manhattan, his goal seemed unreachable. Still, he

was persistently writing to prominent devotees in India, though they were not interested in his plans.

"Why should they not help?" he thought. After all, they were devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Shouldn't the devotees come forward to establish the first Kṛṣṇa temple in America? Certainly he was qualified and authorized to spread the message of Kṛṣṇa. As for the place, New York was perhaps the most cosmopolitan city in the world. He had found a building—not very expensive, a good location—and there was a great need for a Kṛṣṇa temple here to offset the propaganda of the Indian Māyāvādīs. The kṛṣṇa-bhaktas to whom he was writing understood Lord Kṛṣṇa to be not simply a Hindu Deity but the Supreme Lord, worshipable for the whole world. So they should be pleased to see Kṛṣṇa worshiped in New York. Kṛṣṇa Himself said in the Bhagavad-gītā, "Give up all other duties and surrender to Me." So if they were Kṛṣṇa's devotees, why would they not help? What kind of devotee was it who did not want to glorify the Lord?

But Śrīla Prabhupāda did not judge beforehand who would serve Kṛṣṇa's mission and who would not. He was fully surrendered and fully dependent on Kṛṣṇa, and in obedience to his spiritual master he would approach everyone, without discrimination, to ask for help.

There was Sumati Morarji. She had helped him in publishing the Bhāgavatam, and she had sent him to America. In a recent letter to her he had only given hints:

I am just giving you the idea, and if you kindly think over the matter seriously and consult your beloved Lord Bala Krishna, surely you will be further enlightened in the matter. There is scope and there is certainly necessity also, and it is the duty of every Indian, especially the devotees of Lord Krishna, to take up the matter.

But he had received no reply. He had not heard from her since Butler, though her words to him had seemed prophetic. And they had stuck with him: "I feel that you should stay there until you fully recover from your illness and return only after you have completed your mission."

Now Sumati Morarji must do something big. He told her pointblank:

I think therefore that a temple of Bala Krishna in New York may immediately be started for this purpose. And as a devotee of Lord Bala Krishna, you should execute this great and noble work. Till now there is no worshipable temple of the Hindus in New York, although in India there are so many American missionary establishments and churches. So I shall request you to do this noble act, and it will be recorded in the history of the world that the first Hindu temple is started by a pious Hindu lady SRIMATI SUMATI MORARJI who is not only a big business magnate in India, but a pious Hindu lady and great devotee of Lord Krishna. This task is for you, and glorious at the same time...

He assured her that he had no ambition to become the proprietor of a house or temple in America; but for preaching, a building would be absolutely required:

They should have association of bona fide devotees of the Lord, they should join the kirtan glorifying the Lord, they should hear the teachings of Śrīmad Bhagwatam, they should have

intimate touch with the temple or place of the Lord, and they should be given ample chance to worship the Lord in the temple. Under the guidance of the bona fide devotee, they can be given such facilities, and the way of the Śrīmad Bhagwatam is open for everyone...

He informed her that he had located a building "just suitable for this great missionary work." It was ideal, "as if it was built for this purpose only."

... and your simple willingness to do the act will complete everything smoothly.

The house is practically three stories. Ground floor, basement, and two stories up, with all the suitable arrangements for gas, heat, etc. The ground floor may be utilized for preparation of prasadam of Bala Krishna, because the preaching center will not be for dry speculation but for actual gain—for delicious prasadam. I have already tested how the people here like the vegetable prasadam prepared by me. They will forget meat-eating and pay for the expenses. American people are not poor men like the Indians, and if they appreciate a thing, they are prepared to spend any amount on such hobby. They are being exploited simply by jugglery of words and bodily gymnastics, and still they are spending for that. But when they will have the actual commodity and feel pleasure by eating very delicious prasadam of Bala Krishna, I am sure a unique thing will be introduced in America.

Now, according to his plans, he had a week left in America.

My term to stay in America will be finished by the 17th of November, 1965. But I am believing in your foretelling, "You should stay there until you fully recover your health, and return after you have completed your mission."

* * *

TAGORE SOCIETY OF NEW YORK Inc.

CORDIALLY INVITES YOU

to a lecture:

"GOD CONSCIOUSNESS"

by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Date: Sunday, November 28, 1965

Time: Lecture, 3:30 P.M. Tea, 4:30 P.M.

Place: New India House, 3 East 64th Street

A widely respected scholar and religious leader in India,

Swami Bhaktivedanta is briefly visiting New York. He has been engaged in a monumental endeavor of translating the sixty-volume Śrīmad Bhagwatam from Sanskrit into English.

November 28

Daoud Haroon had never met Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was a musician living downtown, and he used to attend the meetings of the Tagore Society up on Sixty-fourth Street.

Daoud Haroon: I went uptown and walked into the auditorium, and I noticed that the stage was empty and a few people were sitting toward the rear of the auditorium. I walked forward down the center aisle, because I usually like to sit up front. Then I saw an old gentleman sitting over to the right, and he sort of drew me over to him. So I went over and sat beside him, and then I noticed that he was saying his beads. Even though he had his beads in a bag, I could hear them, and I could see his body moving. And I felt very comfortable, because this was something I was used to.

As I was sitting there looking around the auditorium, he just turned around and smiled at me very nicely. He nodded his head, and I nodded my head, and he smiled and turned around. Then he turned back to me again and softly asked me if I was from India. I said, "No, sir, I'm not from India. I am from here, the United States." He turned back, and he kept chanting with his beads. Then he turned around the next time and asked if I was a Hindu. I said, "No, sir, I'm not a Hindu. I'm a Muslim." And he said, "Oh, very good, very good. Yes, many times I hear the children in India reciting the Koran." And then he turned back around and his body was moving, rocking, and he was working with his beads.

Then there were a few more exchanges of pleasantries, sort of intermittent. And then a lady came up on the stage and announced that the lecture was to begin and if the folks could give the speaker a round of applause they would welcome him to the stage. At that point, the man I was sitting next to put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Excuse me, sir, could you do me a favor?" And I said, "Yes, anything." He said, "Would you watch over my books?" I looked down on the floor, and he had several boxes of books and an umbrella and several other articles. I said yes I would watch over these. And he said, "Excuse me." He walked up the aisle, and surprisingly, he walked up on the stage. And it was the man I had come to hear—Swami Bhaktivedanta!

He walked up on the stage and introduced himself to the people and tried to get them to come forward. He said, "Come forward, come forward." A few of them came up to the front. There were mixed couples, many Indians, male and female, mostly middle-aged and some college aged, a lot of professor-types and ladies were there.

Then he began his speech. He dove right into it. He just started exclaiming, proclaiming, the greatness of the Creator and that the most important thing is to remember the Creator and remember God. He began to expand on God consciousness, what God consciousness is and how

God is everywhere and how it behooves us all to remember God—no matter what we call Him, what names we call Him by, but that we should call Him. He gave a demonstration which was very moving. He chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma and spoke about the power and saving grace in the mantra. He took a little break about halfway through and had some water.

The last thing he said as he was coming down from the podium was that he had copies of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He explained that he had been working on them and that they came in three volumes and were sixteen dollars. Then he concluded and came down.

A lot of people went over to him. Some were timid, some were enthusiastic. Some people shook his hand and were asking for books. At first there were about fifteen people gathered around him talking to him and asking questions. With so many people around, he came over to me and said, "Sir, would you do me one more favor? Will you kindly take over the selling of the books? People will be coming to you for the books, so you sell the books and put the money in this little box, and I will be with you in a minute." I said, "Fine."

So while he talked to the people, others came up to me. They must have thought I was somehow his secretary or his traveling companion, and people were coming over to me and asking me personal questions about him, which I couldn't really answer because I didn't know. Some people were buying the books or looking through them. So this went on, and I was trying to listen to him carry on his conversations with people and carry on the book-selling at the same time.

Some of the people were looking for a guru and trying to find out what he was supposed to be. Some of them were really interrogating him. But he just smiled and answered all their questions simply. I remember he told them, "You will know. There's no pressure. You will know if I am your guru." He suggested that people go over and read the books.

And then the group dwindled down to about half a dozen, and the few remaining were just looking at him, and some were too timid to approach him. He walked over to them and spoke to them, putting them at ease. Later he came over, and we counted the collection, and I helped him pack up his box and carry downstairs the boxes of books that were left. As we parted he thanked me very much, and I gave him my name and address and phone number and purchased a set of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams.

SPL 15: "It Will Not Be Possible to Assist You"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"It Will Not Be Possible to Assist You"

I have come here in this old age neither for sightseeing nor for any personal interest. It is for the interest of the entire humanity that I am trying to implement the science of Krishna which will actually make them happy. So it is the duty of every devotee of Lord Krishna to help me by all means.

—from a letter to Sumati Morarji

November passed and December came, and Prabhupāda, having obtained an extension on his visa, stayed on. America seemed so opulent, yet many things were difficult to tolerate. The sirens and bells from fire engines and police cars seemed like they would crack his heart. Sometimes at night he would hear a person being attacked and crying for help. From his first days in the city, he had noted that the smell of dog stool was everywhere. And although it was such a rich city, he could rarely find a mango to purchase, and if he did, it was very expensive and usually had no taste. From his room he would sometimes hear the horns of ocean liners, and he would dream that some day he would sail around the world with a sankīrtana party, preaching in all the major cities of the world. The weather went below freezing, colder than he had ever experienced in India. Daily he had to walk toward the Hudson against a west wind that even on an ordinary winter's day would take your breath away and make your eyes water and your face grow numb. On a stormy day, the driving wind and sudden gusts could even knock a man down. Sometimes a cold rain would turn the streets slick with ice. The cold would become especially severe as one approached the shelterless, windswept area of West Side Drive, where occasional whirlwinds carried brown leaves and paper trash mysteriously high into the air.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wore a coat Dr. Mishra had given him, but he never gave up wearing his dhotī, despite the cold, windy walks. Swami Nikhīlananda of the Ramakrishna Mission had advised Prabhupāda that if he wanted to stay in the West he should abandon his traditional Indian dress and strict vegetarianism. Meat-eating and liquor, as well as pants and coat, were almost a necessity in this climate, he had said. Before Prabhupāda had left India, one of his Godbrothers had demonstrated to him how he should eat in the West with a knife and fork. But Prabhupāda never considered taking on Western ways. His advisors cautioned him not to remain an alien but to get into the spirit of American life, even if it meant breaking vows he had held in India; almost all Indian immigrants compromised their old ways. But Prabhupāda's idea was different, and he could not be budged. The others may have had to compromise, he thought, but they had come to beg technological knowledge from the West. "I have not come to beg something," he said, "but to give something."

In his solitary wanderings, Śrīla Prabhupāda made acquaintances with a number of local people. There was Mr. Ruben, a Turkish Jew, who worked as a New York City subway conductor. Mr. Ruben met Prabhupāda on a park bench and, being a sociable fellow and a world traveler, sat and talked with the Indian holy man.

Mr. Ruben: He seemed to know that he would have temples filled up with devotees. He would look out and say, "I am not a poor man, I am rich. There are temples and books, they are existing, they are there, but the time is separating us from them." He always mentioned "we" and spoke about the one who sent him, his spiritual master. He didn't know people at that time, but he said, "I am never alone." He always looked like a lonely man to me. That's what made me think of him like a holy man, Elijah, who always went out alone. I don't believe he had any followers.

When the weather was not rainy or icy, Prabhupāda would catch the bus to Grand Central Station and visit the Central Library on Forty-second Street. His Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams were there—some of the same volumes he had sold to the U.S. embassy in New Delhi—and he took pleasure in seeing them listed in the card catalog and learning that they were being regularly checked out and read.

He would sometimes walk through U.N. Plaza or walk up to New India House on Sixty-fourth Street, where he had met Mr. Malhotra, a consulate officer. It was through Mr. Malhotra that he had contacted the Tagore Society and had secured an invitation to lecture before one of their meetings back in November.

Riding the bus down Fifth Avenue, he would look out at the buildings and imagine that some day they could be used in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He would take a special interest in certain buildings: one on Twenty-third Street and one with a dome on Fourteenth Street attracted his attention. He would think of how the materialists had constructed such elaborate buildings and had yet made no provisions for spiritual life. Despite all the great achievements of technology, the people felt empty and useless. They had built these great buildings, but the children were going to LSD.

December 2

New York Times headlines: "New York City Hospitals Report Marked Rise in LSD Cases Admitted for Care." "Protest Against U.S. Participation in Vietnam War Mounts."

The weather grew cold, but there was no snow in December. On Columbus Avenue shops were selling Christmas trees, and the continental restaurants were bright with holiday lighting. On Seventy-second the Retailers' Association erected tall red poles topped with green tinsel Christmas trees. The tops of the trees on both sides of the street sprouted tinsel garlands that spanned the street and joined in red tinsel stars surrounded by colored lights.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda did no Christmas shopping, he visited many bookstores—Orientalia, Sam Weiser's, Doubleday, the Paragon, and others—trying to sell his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams. Mrs. Ferber, the wife of the Paragon Book Gallery proprietor, considered Prabhupāda "a pleasant and extremely polite small gentleman." The first time he called she wasn't interested in his books, but he tried again, and she took several volumes. Prabhupāda used to stop by about once a week, and since his books were selling regularly, he would collect. Sometimes when he needed copies to sell personally, he would come by and pick them up from Mrs. Ferber, and sometimes he would phone to ask her how his books were selling.

Mrs. Ferber: Every time he came he would ask for a glass of water. If a customer would make such a request, I would ordinarily say, "There is the water cooler." But because he was an old man, I couldn't tell him that, of course. He was very polite always, very modest, and a great scholar. So whenever he would ask, I would fetch him a cup of water personally.

Once Prabhupāda was talking with Mrs. Ferber about Indian cuisine, and she mentioned that she especially liked samosās. The next time he paid her a visit, he brought a tray of samosās, which she enjoyed.

* * *

Harvey Cohen came often to room 501 to visit the swami who had so impressed him at Ananda Ashram.

Harvey: The room he occupied was a tiny office in the back of the Yoga Society in uptown Manhattan. I began to go there regularly, and we sat facing each other on the floor in this little office with his typewriter and a new tape recorder on top of two suitcases. And there was a box of books he had brought from India and a color reproduction of dancing figures which he looked at often. I told Swami Bhaktivedanta that I was an artist, and he asked me to please paint the picture of the dancers, which he explained was of Lord Caitanya and His disciples. The painting was called "Saṅkīrtana." Whenever I came to visit him, Swami would always be happy to see me. I told him about myself, and we chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa together in his room many nights that winter. I would get the train uptown from my apartment to go see him.

* * *

January 11, 1966

Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri died of a heart attack while visiting Russia. The prime minister had been a personal acquaintance of Śrīla Prabhupāda's in India and an admirer of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam translation. He had been scheduled to visit America, and Prabhupāda had expected to obtain a personal sanction from him for the release of funds from India. His untimely death was a great upset in Śrīla Prabhupāda's plans to purchase the building at 143 West Seventy-second Street. The realtors had shown him the building, and he had already mentally designed the interior for Deity worship and distribution of prasādam. The money was to come from India, and Prime Minister Shastri was to give personal sanction for release of the funds. But suddenly that was all changed.

January 14

Prabhupāda decided to write to the owner of the building, Mr. A. M. Hartman. He explained how his plans had been upset, and he posed a new plan.

Now the Prime Minister, Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri, is suddenly dead, and I am greatly perplexed... As there is now great difficulty for getting money from India, I am requesting you to allow me to use the place for the International Institution for God Consciousness, at least for some time. The house is lying vacant for so many days without any use, and I learn it that you are paying the taxes, insurance, and other charges for the house, although you have no income from there. If you, however, allow this place for this public institution, you shall at least save the taxes and other charges which you are paying now for nothing.

If I can start the institution immediately, certainly I shall be able to get sympathy locally, and in that case I may not be required to get money from India. I am also requesting that your honor become one of the Directors of this public institution, because you will give a place to start the institution.

A. M. Hartman wasn't interested.

On the same day he wrote Mr. Hartman, Prabhupāda received a letter from Sir Padampat Singhania, the director of the very large JK Organization in India. Prabhupāda had written Sir Padampatji for

financial support, and his reply gave him hope. Not only was the Singhanian family fabulously wealthy, but its members were devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

My dear Swamiji,

I have gone through your letter. I am very glad to note your idea of erecting a Shri Radha Krishna temple in New York. I think the proposal is a good one, but the following are the difficulties:

1. We have got to send foreign exchange for building the temple, for which Government sanction is required. Without the Government sanction, no money can be sent abroad. If the Government of India agrees, then one can think of erecting the temple in New York.
2. I doubt whether with this small amount of Rs. 7 lakhs [\$110,000.00] a temple can be built in New York. I mean to carry out a nice Construction with Indian type of architecture. To get a temple completed in Indian type of architecture we have to send a man from India.

These are the two main difficulties, otherwise, your idea is very good.

Śrīla Prabhupāda and Mr. Singhanian had a basic disagreement. A magnificent Indian temple in New York would cost many millions of dollars to construct. Prabhupāda knew, of course, that if Padampat Singhanian wanted, he could provide millions of dollars. But then how would they get so much money out of India? Prabhupāda therefore again suggested that they spend only seven lakhs. "After purchasing the house," he wrote, "we can build another story upon it with a temple dome, cakra, etc." Prabhupāda had his own line of reasoning:

Lord Dwarkadish exhibited His opulence at Dwarka with 16,000 queens, and it is understood that He built a palace for each and every queen. And the palaces were made with jewels and stones so that there was no necessity for artificial light in the palaces. So your conception of building a temple of Lord Krishna is in opulence. But we are residents of Vrindaban, and Vrindaban has no palaces like your Dwarka. Vrindaban is full of forests and cows on the bank of the Jamuna, and Lord Krishna in His childhood played the part of a cowherd boy without any royal opulence as you people, the inhabitants of Dwarka, are accustomed. So when the Dwarka walas meet the Vrindaban walas, there may be a via media.

With Sir Padampat's Dvārakā-like wealth and Śrīla Prabhupāda's Vṛndāvana-like devotion, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of both Vṛndāvana and Dvārakā, could be properly worshiped.

January 21

He received Bon Mahārāja's reply. Two weeks before, Prabhupāda had written to his Godbrother, the director of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy in Vṛndāvana, that he had found a place for a temple in New York and that he wanted to install Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In his reply, Bon Mahārāja quoted price estimates for fourteen-inch brass Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, but he also warned that to begin Deity worship would be a heavy responsibility. Śrīla Prabhupāda responded:

I think that after the temple has started, some men, even from America, may be available, as I see they have at the Ramakrishna Mission as well as in so many yoga societies. So I am trying to open a temple here because Śrīla Prabhupāda [Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī] wanted it.

Prabhupāda also requested Bon Mahārāja's assistance in getting the government to sanction release of the money he felt Padampat Singhanian would donate. He mentioned that he had carried on an extensive personal correspondence with the vice-president of India, Dr. Rādhākṛṣṇan, who was also known to Bon Mahārāja.

Tell him that it is not an ordinary temple of worship but an international institution for God consciousness based on the Śrīmad Bhagwatam.

January 22

While Śrīla Prabhupāda prayed to receive Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in New York, a snowstorm hit the city. That morning, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who had perhaps never before seen snow, woke and thought that someone had whitewashed the side of the building next door. Not until he went outside did he discover that it was snow. The temperature was ten degrees.

The city went into a state of emergency, but Prabhupāda continued his daily walks. Now he had to walk through heavy snow, only a thin dhotī beneath his overcoat, his head covered with his "swami hat." The main roads were cleared, but many sidewalks were covered with snow. Along the strip of park dividing Broadway, the gusting winds piled snowbanks to shoulder height and buried the benches. The Broadway kiosks, plastered with layers of posters and notices, were now plastered with additional layers of snow and ice. But despite the weather, New Yorkers still walked their dogs, the pets now wearing raincoats and mackinaws. Such pampering by American dog owners left Prabhupāda with a feeling of surprised amusement. As he approached West End Avenue, he found the doormen blowing whistles to signal taxis as usual, but also scattering salt to melt the ice and create safe sidewalks in front of the buildings. In Riverside Park the benches, pathways, and trees were glazed with ice and gave off a shimmering reflection from the sky.

In the news, Selective Service officials announced the first substantial increase in the draft since the Korean war; a month-long peace ended with the U.S. Air Force bombing North Vietnam; the New York transit strike ended after three weeks, and the transit labor leader died in jail of a heart attack.

January 30

The East Coast was hit by severe blizzards. Seven inches of snow fell on the city, with winds up to fifty miles an hour. The City of New York offered warm rooms and meals for people living in tenements without heat. JFK Airport was closed, as were train lines and roadways into the city. For the second time within eight days, a state of emergency was declared because of snow.

As a lone individual, Śrīla Prabhupāda could not do anything about the snow emergency or the international warfare—he saw these as mere symptoms of the Age of Kali. Always there would be misery in the material world. But if he could bring Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to a building in New York... Nothing was impossible for the Supreme Lord. Even in the midst of Kali-yuga a golden age could

appear, and people could get relief. If Americans could take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the whole world would follow. Seeing through the eyes of the scriptures, Śrīla Prabhupāda pushed on through the blizzard and pursued the thin trail for support of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness mission.

February 4

He wrote again to Tīrtha Mahārāja, who had agreed to try for the government sanction if he first received written confirmation from a responsible donor pledging the funds for a temple. Prabhupāda informed him that the donor would be Sir Padampat Singhanian, and he enclosed Mr. Singhanian's favorable letter of the fourteenth. Prabhupāda reminded his Godbrother:

Śrīla Prabhupad Bhaktisiddhanta wanted such temples in foreign cities like New York, London, Tokyo, etc., and I had personal talks with him when I first met him at Ulta Danga in 1922. Now here is a chance for me to carry out his transcendental order. I am just seeking your favor and mercy in making this attempt successful.

February 5

Discouragement came to the plans Śrīla Prabhupāda had formed around the promise of support by Padampat Singhanian. The Dvārakāvālā wrote to express his dissatisfaction with the Seventy-second Street building.

I am afraid that I cannot agree with your suggestion that you should buy a small house and erect something on top of it. Unfortunately, such a kind of proposal will not suit me. The temple must be a small one, but it must be constructed properly. I quite agree that you cannot spend a lot of money at present, but within the amount the government may sanction, you should build something according to the architecture of Indian temples. Then only will we be able to create some impression on the American people. This is all I can write to you in this connection. I am very grateful for your taking the trouble of writing me.

Prabhupāda did not take this letter as final. He maintained hope that Sir Padampat Singhanian would still give money for the temple, if only the transfer of money could be arranged. He continued writing his Godbrothers and other devotees, asking them to try to secure the government's sanction. He maintained his same aspirations, even though his sole prospective donor had rejected his scheme of a cakṛa and dome atop a conventional two-story building.

* * *

February 15

He moved from room 501 downstairs two floors to a room all his own.

I have changed my room to Room 307, in the same building as above mentioned, for better air and light. It is on the roadside junction of two roads, the Columbus Avenue and 72nd Street.

According to Dr. Mishra, Prabhupāda moved in order to have his own place, independent of the Mishra Yoga Society.

* * *

February 16

Prabhupāda wrote to the proprietors of the Universal Book House of Bombay, giving some hints for selling his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in the Bombay area. He explained that he was trying to establish a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple and that "a big industrialist of India has promised to pay for the cost." Since it seemed that he might stay in the United States "for many more days," he wanted the Book House to take increased charge of selling his books throughout India. They were his agent for selling his books in Maharashtra, but now he recommended they take the responsibility in all provinces and introduce his books in colleges and universities throughout India. He also requested that they credit his bank account there for the books sold so far.

February 26

Mr. A. P. Dharwadkar of the Universal Book House replied:

I cannot give you very happy news on the progress of the sale of Śrīmad Bhagwatam, because the subject is religious and only a small section of society may personally be interested in the books... We tried to push them through some book sellers to Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Poona, etc., but regret to inform you that after some time these book sellers return the books for want of response. As such, we are not only unenthusiastic to agree to your proposal of taking up sales for all India, but we were just thinking of requesting you to nominate some other people in our place to represent your sale program in Maharashtra.

So far, they had sold only six sets of his books, for which they were about to transfer Rs. 172 to his account. This was hardly encouraging to the author. Again, India was not interested. Even in "the land of religion," religious subjects were only for "a small section of society."

March 4

Another reverse. On February 8, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written to India's new prime minister, Indira Gandhi, requesting her to sanction the release of money from India. A reply, dated February 25, New Delhi, came from the prime minister's official secretary, Mr. L. K. Gha.

Dear Swamiji,

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of February 8, 1966. She appreciates the spirit which prompted you to carry the spiritual message of Śrīmad Bhagwat Geeta and Śrīmad Bhagwatam to other countries. Owing to the critical foreign exchange situation which the country is facing, it is greatly regretted that it will not be possible to assist you from here in your plan to set up a Radha Krishna temple.

But Prabhupāda had other hopes. After writing to the prime minister, he had written again to Tīrtha Mahārāja, asking him to request Dr. Rādhākṛishnan to persuade the government to sanction the release of funds. He waited for one month. No answer.

Apparently his Godbrothers felt little obligation toward preaching in America; he had written that he needed encouragement from them to continue in America, because it was so expensive. He had explained that he was spending the equivalent of one thousand rupees a month. "As such, I am counting every day to receive your favorable replies." But there was no reply.

March 18

He wrote again to Sir Padampat Singhanian, requesting him to send a man from India to supervise work on the temple in New York, as Mr. Singhanian had previously suggested.

There is no record of any reply to this request.

Prabhupāda wrote again to Sumati Morarji, requesting her to please send him a mṛdaṅga to accompany his chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. He also requested her that in the future, when he would send many men from India, she oblige by giving them free passage on Scindia Steamship Lines.

No reply.

As his financial situation became more urgent and his hopes more strained, his support from India withdrew in silence. His unanswered correspondence was itself a kind of message, loud and clear: "We cannot help you."

Although no one encouraged him, Śrīla Prabhupāda trusted in the order of his spiritual master and the will of Kṛṣṇa. The word from the prime minister regarding government sanction had been a definite no. But he had received another extension of his visa. Now his last hope was Sir Padampat Singhanian. Prabhupāda knew that he was so influential a man in India that if he wanted he could send the money. He was Prabhupāda's final hope.

April 2

Mr. Singhanian did not reply personally. He had his secretary, Mr. Easwara Iyer, write to Prabhupāda, thoroughly discouraging his last hopes for purchasing a building in New York.

I regret to write that Sir Padampatji is not interested in the scheme of building a Radha Krishna temple in New York at present. In regard to the inquiry contained in the last paragraph of your letter, Sir Padampatji duly received your books of Śrīmad Bhagwatam from your Delhi office. Yours faithfully.

* * *

Seeing him from a distance—a tiny figure walking Manhattan's streets and avenues among many other tiny figures, a foreigner whose visa had almost run out—we come upon only the external appearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda. These days of struggle were real enough and very difficult, but his transcendental consciousness was always predominant. He was not living in Manhattan consciousness, but was absorbed in dependence upon Kṛṣṇa, just as when on the Jaladuta he had suffered his heart attacks, his reading of Caitanya-caritāmṛta had supplied him “the nectarine of life.”

He had already succeeded. Certainly he wanted to provide Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa a temple in New York, but his success was that he was remembering Kṛṣṇa, even in New York City in the winter of 1965–66, whether the world recognized him or not. Not a day went by when he did not work on Kṛṣṇa's book, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. And not a day went by when he did not offer food to Kṛṣṇa and speak on Kṛṣṇa's philosophy of Bhagavad-gītā.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad-gītā, “For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost to him, and he is never lost to Me.” And Kṛṣṇa assures His pure devotees that, “My devotee will never be vanquished.” There was never any doubt about this for Prabhupāda. The only question was whether Americans would take notice of the pure devotee in their midst. At this point it seemed that no one was going to take him seriously.

SPL 16: Free to Preach

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Free to Preach

Here I am now sitting in New York, the world's greatest city, such a magnificent city, but my heart is always hankering after that Vṛndāvana. I shall be very happy to return to my Vṛndāvana, that sacred place. But then, “Why are you here?” Now, because it is my duty. I have brought some message for you people. Because I have been ordered by my superior, my spiritual master: “Whatever you have learned, you should go to the Western countries, and you must distribute this knowledge.” So in spite of all my difficulties, all my inconveniences, I am here. Because I am obligated by duty.

—from a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda

Room 307 was never meant for use as a residence or āśrama or lecture hall. It was only a small, narrow office without furniture or a telephone. Its door held a large pane of frosted glass, the kind common in old offices; above the door was a glass-paned transom. Prabhupāda placed his blankets on the floor before his metal footlocker, which now became a makeshift desk where he wrote. He slept on the floor. There were no facilities here for cooking or even for bathing, so daily he had to walk to Dr. Mishra's apartment.

When he had lived in room 501 at Dr. Mishra's yoga āśrama, Dr. Mishra had financed his needs. But now Prabhupāda was on his own, and whatever he could raise by selling his books, he would have to use for his daily maintenance and for the monthly rent of seventy-two dollars. He noted

that for a little powdered chili the West End Superette charged twenty-five cents, ten times what he would have paid in India. He had no guaranteed income, his expenses had increased, and his physical comforts had reduced. But at least he had his own place. Now he was free to preach as he liked.

He had come to America to speak about Kṛṣṇa, and even from the beginning he had found the opportunity to do so, whether at an informal get-together in the Agarwals' living room or before a formal gathering at the Butler Lions Club, Dr. Norman Brown's Sanskrit class, Dr. Mishra's Yoga Society, or the Tagore Society. But he did not attach much importance to lecturing where the people who gathered would hear him only once. This was the main reason he wanted his own building in New York: so that people could come regularly, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, take prasādam in his company, and hear him speak from Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Moving out of the yoga studio into the small office downstairs gave Prabhupāda what he was looking for—his own place—but not even euphemistically could that place be called a temple. His name was on the door; anyone seeking him there could find him. But who would come there? By its opulence and beauty, a temple was supposed to attract people to Kṛṣṇa. But room 307 was just the opposite: it was bare poverty. Even a person interested in spiritual topics would find it uncomfortable to sit on the rugless floor of a room shaped like a narrow railroad car.

One of Dr. Mishra's students had donated a reel-to-reel tape recorder, and Prabhupāda recorded some of his solitary bhajanas, which he sang to his own accompaniment of hand cymbals. He also recorded a long philosophical essay, Introduction to Gītopaniṣad. "Even if no one attends," Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had told him, "you can go on chanting to the four walls." But since he was now free to speak his message in the new situation God had provided, he decided to lecture three evenings a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) to whoever would come.

His first audiences consisted mainly of people who had heard about him or met him at Dr. Mishra's yoga studio. And despite the poverty of his room, the meetings became a source of new life for him.

March 18

He expressed his optimism in a letter to Sumati Morarji:

I was very much encouraged when you wrote to say, "I feel that you should stay there until you fully recover from your illness, and return only after you have completed your mission." I think these lines dictated by you are the words of Lord Bala Krishna expressed through your goodness.

You will be pleased to know that I have improved my health back to normal, and my missionary work is nicely progressing. I hope my project to start a temple of Sri Sri Radha Krishna will also be realized by the grace of the Lord.

Since I came to New York from Butler, Pennsylvania, I have rented the above room at seventy dollars per month, and am delivering lectures on the Bhagwat Geeta and Śrīmad Bhagwatam, accompanied by sankirtan, and the American ladies and gentlemen come to hear me. You will be surprised to know that they do not understand the language of sankirtan, yet they hear with

attention. The movement which I have started here is completely new to them, because the Americans are generally acquainted with the Indian yoga gymnastics as performed by some Indian yogis here. They have never heard of the bhakti cult of the science of Krishna before, and still they are hearing me. This is a great success for me.

* * *

Outside the closed windows of room 307, the late winter night has fallen. Prabhupāda's words are punctuated with the muted sounds of car horns and occasional sirens from the street, and sometimes by the startling chords of a lonely foghorn on the Hudson. Although bare, the room is warm. Prabhupāda is speaking on the Second Chapter of Bhagavad-gītā.

Now Arjuna is perplexed. He is perplexed about whether to fight or not to fight. After seeing in front of him his relatives with whom he was to fight, he was perplexed. And there was some argument with Kṛṣṇa.

Now here is a point: Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead...

Prabhupāda's voice is earnest, persuading. Sometimes his speech becomes high-pitched and breaks with urgency. His cultured British diction bears a heavy Bengali accent.

Suddenly he pauses in his lecture and addresses someone in the room.

Prabhupāda: What is that?

Man: What?

Prabhupāda: What is this book?

Man: Well, this is a translation of the Bhagavad-gītā.

Prabhupāda is obviously displeased that while he is speaking someone is looking through a book. This is hardly like the respect offered to learned speakers described in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Prabhupāda: Well, no, you can hear me.

Man: I am hearing.

Prabhupāda: Yes, don't turn your attention. Just hear me.

He is taking the role of a teacher correcting his student. Of course, there is no compelling reason why any of his casual guests should feel obliged to obey him. He simply begs for their attention, and yet demands it—"Just hear me"—as he attempts to convince them of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

You have heard that one must accept the spiritual master after careful examination, just as one selects a bride or a bridegroom after careful examination. In India they are very careful. Because the

marriage of boys and girls takes place under the guidance of the parents, so the parents very carefully see to it. Similarly, one has to accept the spiritual master. It is necessary. According to Vedic injunctions, everyone should have a spiritual master. Perhaps you have seen a sacred thread. We have got sacred thread. Mr. Cohen? You have seen? Sacred thread.

Prabhupāda pauses. His audience has not noted the thin, white cords he wears beneath his shirt across the upper part of his body. For thousands of years, brāhmaṇas in India have worn such threads, placed diagonally across the torso, looped over the left shoulder and down to the right waist. A brāhmaṇa holds his thread in his right hand while chanting the sacred Gāyatrī mantra three times a day. But this is all strange indeed to Americans. Prabhupāda himself is exotic to them. His gray chādar wrapped around his shoulders, he sits cross-legged and erect on a thin pillow, and they sit facing him on the other side of his trunk, which now serves as a desk and lectern. They are close together in the narrowness of the room. He is frail and small and foreign to them, yet somehow he is completely assured, in a way that has nothing to do with being a foreigner in New York. Visitors sense his strong presence. Two white lines of clay run neatly vertical on his forehead. His pale peach clothes are gathered in loose folds around his body. He pauses only a few seconds to inquire whether they have seen a sacred thread.

That sacred thread is a sign that a person has a spiritual master. Here, of course, there is no such distinction, but according to the Hindu system a married girl also has some sign so that people can understand that this girl is married. She wears a red mark so that others may know that she is married. And according to the division in the hair... what is this line called?

Man: Part.

Prabhupāda: Hmm?

Man: Part.

Prabhupāda: What is the spelling?

Man: Part.

Prabhupāda: Part. This parting also has some meaning. (They know English, and he knows the Gītā. But he knows a good deal of English, whereas they know practically nothing of the Gītā, which he has to spoon-feed to them. But occasionally he asks their help in English vocabulary.) When the part is in the middle, then the girl has her husband, and she is coming from a respectable family. And if the part is here, then she is a prostitute. (With a slight gesture he raises his hand toward, but never really reaching, his head. Yet somehow the half-gesture clearly indicates a part on the side of the head) And then again when a girl is well dressed, it should be understood that she has her husband at home. And when she is not well dressed, it is to be understood that her husband is away from home. You see? And a widow's dress... There are so many symptoms. So, similarly, the sacred thread is a sign that a person has accepted a spiritual master, just as the red mark symbolizes that a girl has a husband.

Although his audience may be momentarily enamored by what appears to be a description of Indian social customs, a careful listener can grasp the greater context of Prabhupāda's speech: Everyone must accept a spiritual master. It's a heavy topic for a casual audience. What is the need of taking a spiritual master? Isn't this just for India? But he says, "Everyone should have a spiritual master." What is a spiritual master anyway? Maybe he means that accepting a spiritual master is just another cultural item from Hinduism, like the thread, or the part in a woman's hair, or the widow's dress. The audience can easily regard his discussion as a kind of cultural exposition, just as one comfortably watches a film about the living habits of people in a foreign land although one has no intention of adopting these habits as one's own. The Swami is wearing one of those threads on his body, but that's for Hindus, and it doesn't mean that Americans should wear them. But these Hindu beliefs are interesting.

Actually, Prabhupāda has no motive but to present the Absolute Truth as he has heard it in disciplic succession. But if anyone in that railroad-car-shaped room were to ask himself, "Should I surrender to a spiritual master?" he would be confronted by the existential presence of a genuine guru. One is free to regard his talk as one likes.

In every step of one's life, the spiritual master guides. Now, to give such guidance a spiritual master should also be a very perfect man. Otherwise how can he guide? Now, here Arjuna knows that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the perfect person. So therefore he is accepting Him—*śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam*.

Sanskrit! No one knows a word of it! But there is never any question for Śrīla Prabhupāda—even if they don't understand it, the transcendental sound of śāstra will purify them. It is his authority, and he cannot omit it. And even at first impression, it presents an air of scholarly authority—the original, though foreign, words of the sages.

"I am just surrendering unto You, and You accept me as Your disciple," Arjuna says. Friendly talks cannot make a solution to perplexity. Friendly talks may be going on for years together, but no solution. So here, Arjuna accepts Kṛṣṇa as the spiritual master. This means that whatever Kṛṣṇa will dictate, he has to accept. One cannot deny the order of the spiritual master. Therefore, one has to select a spiritual master by whose orders one will not commit a mistake.

Suppose you accept the wrong person as spiritual master and he guides you wrongly. Then your whole life is spoiled. So one has to accept a spiritual master whose guidance will make one's life perfect. That is the relationship between spiritual master and disciple. It is not a formality. It is a great responsibility, both for the disciple and for the spiritual master. And... Yes?

Student: But if the disciple is in ignorance before...

Prabhupāda: Yes. (Prabhupāda acknowledges a serious question. It is for answering questions like this—from "disciples in ignorance"—that he has left retirement in India and come to America.)

Student:... how does he know which master to choose?—because he doesn't have the knowledge to make a wise decision.

Prabhupāda: Yes. So the first thing is that one should be searching after a spiritual master, just as you search after some school. You must at least have some preliminary knowledge of what a school is. You can't search for a school and go to a cloth shop. If you are so ignorant that you do not know what is a school and what is a cloth shop, then it is very difficult for you. You must know at least what a school is. So that knowledge is like this:

tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet

samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham

According to this verse, the spiritual master is required for a person who is inquisitive about transcendental knowledge. There's another verse in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: *tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*. "One should search after a spiritual master if one is inquisitive about transcendental subject matters." Unless one is at least conversant with preliminary knowledge of transcendental matters, how can he inquire from the spiritual master?

His questioner seems satisfied. The lecture is not a prepared speech on a specific subject. Though grave and thorough in scholarship, it ranges over several philosophical points. Yet he never pauses, groping for words. He knows exactly what he wants to say, and it is only a question of how much his audience can take.

But sometimes his mood is light, and he commiserates with his fellow New Yorkers, chuckling about the difficulties they share: "Suppose there is a heavy snowfall, the whole New York City is flooded with snow, and you are all put into inconvenience. That is a sort of suffering, but you have no control over it." Sometimes he praises Dr. Mishra's students for having learned so nicely from their teacher: "Now, what Dr. Mishra is teaching is very nice. He is teaching that first of all you must know, 'Who am I?' That is very good, but that 'Who am I?' can be known from Bhagavad-gītā also—"I am not this body." And sometimes a guest suddenly speaks out with an irrelevant question, and the Swami patiently tries to consider it.

Yet behind his tolerance, Prabhupāda's mood is always one of urgency. Sometimes he talks quickly and one senses his desire to establish Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West as soon as possible. He has no followers, only a few books, no temples, and he openly states that he is racing against time: "I am an old man. I could leave at any time." So behind the formal delivery of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy is an anxiety, an almost desperate desire to convince at least one soul to take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Immediately.

Now the constrained situations of Butler and the Ananda Ashram and Dr. Mishra are behind him. He is free to speak about the Absolute Truth in full. Throughout his life he has prepared for this, yet he is still discovering the best ways to present Kṛṣṇa, exploring his Western audience, testing their reactions.

We should always remember that He is God. He is all-powerful. In strength, no one could conquer Him. In beauty—as far as beauty is concerned, when He was on the battlefield... Have any of you seen a picture of Kṛṣṇa? Have you seen? Have any of you ever seen Kṛṣṇa? Oh... No?

Prabhupāda's voice fades as he pauses, looking out at his audience. No one has ever seen Kṛṣṇa. None of them have the slightest previous knowledge of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In India, hundreds of millions worship Lord Kṛṣṇa daily as the eternal form of all beauty and truth and view His graceful form in sculpture, painting, and dance. His philosophical teachings in Bhagavad-gītā are all-famous, and Prabhupāda is His intimate emissary. Yet the ladies and gentlemen in room 307 look back at the Swami blankly.

Prabhupāda is discussing the real meaning of going to a sacred place in India.

One should go to a sacred place in order to find some intelligent scholar in spiritual knowledge living there and make association with him. Just like I... my residence is at Vṛndāvana. So at Vṛndāvana there are many big scholars and saintly persons living. So one should go to such holy places, not simply to take bath in the water. One must be intelligent enough to find some spiritually advanced man living there and take instruction from him and be benefited by that. If a man has attachment for going to a place of pilgrimage to take a bath but has no attraction for hearing from learned people there, he is considered to be an ass. (He laughs) Sa eva go-kharaḥ. Go means "cow," and khara means "ass." "So the whole civilization is moving like a civilization of cows and asses. Everyone is identifying with the body... Yes, you want to speak?

Woman: In the places known as secret places—

Prabhupāda: Sacred. Yes.

Woman: Is it "sacred" places?

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Woman: Isn't it also a fact that there is more magnetism because of the meeting of saints and more advanced people?

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes, certainly. Certainly. Therefore the place itself has got some magnetism.

Woman: Yes, and when—

Prabhupāda: Just like at Vṛndāvana—that is practical. Here I am now sitting in New York, the world's greatest city, such a magnificent city, but my heart is always hankering after that Vṛndāvana.

Woman: Yes. (Laughs.)

Prabhupāda: Yes. I am not happy here.

Woman: Yes, I know.

Prabhupāda: I shall be very happy to return to my Vṛndāvana, that sacred place. But then, "Why are you here?" Now, because it is my duty. I have brought some message for you people. Because I have

been ordered by my superior, my spiritual master: "Whatever you have learned you should go to the Western countries, and you must distribute this knowledge." So in spite of all my difficulties, all my inconveniences, I am here. Because I am obligated by duty. If I go and sit down in Vṛndāvana, that will be good for my personal conveniences—I shall be very comfortable there, and I will have no anxiety, nothing of the sort. But I have taken all the risk in this old age because I am duty-bound. I am duty-bound. So I have to execute my duty, despite all my inconveniences.

An outsider opens the door and hesitantly glances inside.

Prabhupāda (stopping his lecture): Yes, yes, come in. You can come here.

* * *

Robert Nelson was like a slow, simple country boy with a homespun manner, even though he had grown up in New York City. He was twenty years old. He wasn't part of the growing hippie movement, he didn't take marijuana or other drugs, and he didn't socialize much. He was a loner. He had gotten some technical education at Staten Island Community College and had tried his hand at the record manufacturing business, but without much success. He was interested in God and would attend various spiritual meetings around the city. So one night he wandered into the Yoga Society to hear Dr. Mishra's lecture, and there he saw Prabhupāda for the first time.

Robert: Swami was sitting cross-legged on a bench. There was a meeting, and Dr. Mishra was standing up before a group of people—there were about fifty people coming there—and he talked on "I Am Consciousness." Dr. Mishra talked and then gave Swami a grand introduction with a big smile. "Swamiji is here," he said. And he swings around and waves his hand for a big introduction. It was beautiful. This was after Dr. Mishra spoke for about an hour. The Swami didn't speak. He sang a song.

Afterward, I went up to him. He had a big smile, and he said that he likes young people to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was very serious about it. He wanted all young people. So I thought that was very nice. It made sense. So I wanted to help.

We stood there talking for about an hour. Mishra had a library in the back, and we looked at certain books—Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa, chariots, and things. And then we walked around. We looked at some of the pictures of swamis on the wall. By that time it was getting very late, and Prabhupāda said come back the next day at ten to his office downstairs.

The next day, when Robert Nelson went to room 307, Prabhupāda invited him in. The room was clearly not intended to serve as a living quarters—there was no toilet, shower, chair, bed, or telephone. The walls were painted "a dark, dismal color." Prabhupāda showed Robert the three-volume set of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which Robert purchased for \$16.50. Then Prabhupāda handed him a small piece of paper with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra printed on it.

Robert: While Swamiji was handing it to me, he had this big smile on his face like he was handing me the world.

We spent the whole day together. At one point he said, "We are going to take a sleep." So he lay down there by his little desk, and so I said, "I am tired too." So I lay down at the other end of the room, and we rested. I just lay on the floor. It was the only place to do it. But he didn't rest that long—an hour and a half, I think—and we spent the rest of the day together. He was talking about Lord Caitanya and the Lord's pastimes, and he showed me a small picture of Lord Caitanya. Then he started talking about the devotees of Lord Caitanya—Nityānanda and Advaita. He had a picture of the five of them and a picture of his spiritual master. He said some things in Sanskrit, and then he translated. It wasn't much of a room, though. You'd really be disappointed if you saw it.

Robert Nelson couldn't give Prabhupāda the kind of assistance he needed. Lord Caitanya states that a person has at his command four assets—his life, money, intelligence, and words—at least one of which he should give to the service of God. Robert Nelson did not seem able to give his whole life to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and as for money, he had very little. His intelligence was also limited, and he spoke unimpressively, nor did he have a wide range of friends or contacts among whom to speak. But he was affectionate toward the Swami, and out of the eight million people in the city, he was practically the only one who showed personal interest in him and offered to help.

From his experience in the record business, Mr. Robert, as Swamiji called him, developed a scheme to produce a record of Swamiji's singing. People were always putting out albums with almost anything on them, he explained, and they would always make money, or at least break even. So it would be almost impossible to lose money. It was a way he thought he could help make the Swami known, and he tried to convince Prabhupāda of the idea. And Prabhupāda didn't discourage Mr. Robert, who seemed eager to render this service.

Robert: Me and the Swami went around to this record company on Forty-sixth Street. We went there, and I started talking, and the man was all business. He was all business and mean—they go together. So we went in there with a tape, and we tried talking to the man. Swami was talking, but the man said he couldn't put the tape out. I think he listened to the tape, but he wouldn't put it out. So we felt discouraged. But he didn't say much about it.

Prabhupāda had been in business in India, and he wasn't about to think that he could suddenly take up business in a foreign country on the advice of a young boy in New York City. Besides, he had come not to do business but to preach. Robert, however, was enthusiastically offering service. Perhaps he wouldn't become a regular brahmācārī student, but he had a desire to serve Kṛṣṇa. For Prabhupāda to refuse him would be perhaps to turn away an interested Western young person. Prabhupāda had come to speak about Kṛṣṇa, to present the chanting, and if Mr. Robert wanted to help by arranging for an American record album then that was welcome.

Mr. Robert and the Swami made an odd combination. Prabhupāda was elderly and dignified, a deep scholar of the Bhāgavatam and the Sanskrit language, whereas Robert Nelson was artless, even in Western culture, and inept in worldly ways. Together they would walk—the Swami wearing his winter coat (with its imitation fur collar), his Indian dhotī, and white pointed shoes; Mr. Robert wearing old khaki pants and an old coat. Prabhupāda walked with rapid, determined strides, outpacing the lumbering, rambling, heavyset boy who had befriended him.

Mr. Robert was supposed to help Prabhupāda in making presentations to businessmen and real estate men, yet he himself was hardly a slick fellow. He was innocent.

Robert: Once we went over to this big office building on Forty-second Street, and we went in there. The rent was thousands of dollars for a whole floor. So I was standing there talking to the man, but I didn't understand how all this money would come. The Swami wanted a big place, and I didn't know what to tell the man.

Prabhupāda wanted a big place, and a big place meant a big price. He had no money, and Robert Nelson had only his unemployment checks. Still, Prabhupāda was interested. If he were to find a building, that would be a great step in his mission. And this was also another way of engaging Mr. Robert. Besides, Kṛṣṇa might do anything, give anything, or work in any way—ordinary or miraculous. So Prabhupāda had his reasoning, and Mr. Robert had his.

Robert: The building was between Sixth and Broadway on Forty-second Street. Some place to open Kṛṣṇa's temple! We went in and up to the second floor and saw the renting agent, and then we left. I think it was five thousand a month or ten thousand a month. We got to a certain point, and the money was too much. And then we left. When he brought up the prices, I figured we had better not. We had to stop.

On another occasion, Robert Nelson took Prabhupāda by bus to the Hotel Columbia, at 70 West Forty-sixth Street. The hotel had a suite that Prabhupāda looked at for possible use as a temple, but again it was very expensive. And there was no money.

Sometimes Robert would make purchases for Prabhupāda with the money from his unemployment checks. Once he bought orange-colored T-shirts. Once he went to Woolworth's and bought kitchen pots and pans and some picture frames for Prabhupāda's pictures of Lord Caitanya and his spiritual master.

Robert: One time I wanted to know how to make capātī cakes, so Swami says, "A hundred dollars, please, for the recipe. A hundred dollars please." So I went and got some money, but I couldn't get a hundred dollars. But he showed me anyway. He taught me to cook and would always repeat, "Wash hands, wash hands," and "You should only eat with your right hand."

And whoever met the Swami was almost always impressed. They would start smiling back to him, and sometimes they would say funny things to each other that were nice. The Swami's English was very technical always. I mean, he had a big vocabulary. But sometimes people had a little trouble understanding him, and you had to help sometimes.

* * *

The Paradox, at 64 East Seventh Street on the Lower East Side, was a restaurant dedicated to the philosophy of Georges Ohsawa and the macrobiotic diet. It was a storefront below street level with small dining tables placed around the candlelit room. The food was inexpensive and well reputed. Tea was served free, as much as you liked. More than just a restaurant, the Paradox was a center for spiritual and cultural interests, a meeting place reminiscent of the cafes of Greenwich Village or

Paris in the 1920s. A person could spend the whole day at the Paradox without buying anything, and no one would complain. The crowd at the Paradox was a mystical congregation, interested in teachings from the East. When news of the new swami uptown at Dr. Mishra's reached the Paradox, the word spread quickly.

Harvey Cohen and Bill Epstein were friends. Harvey was a freelance artist, and Bill worked at the Paradox. After Harvey had been to Prabhupāda's place at Dr. Mishra's yoga studio a few times, he came by the Paradox and began to describe all about the new swami to Bill and other friends.

Bill: I was working at the Paradox one night, when Harvey came to me and said, "I went to visit Mishra, and there's a new swami there, and he's really fantastic!" Well, I was involved in macrobiotics and Buddhism, so at first I couldn't care less. But Harvey was a winning and warm personality, and he seemed interested in this. He said, "Why don't you come uptown? I would like you to see this."

So I went to one of the lectures on Seventy-second Street. I walked in there, and I could feel a certain presence from the Swami. He had a certain very concentrated, intense appearance. He looked pale and kind of weak. I guess he had just come here and he had been through a lot of things. He was sitting there chanting on his beads, which he carried in a little bead bag. One of Dr. Mishra's students was talking, and he finally got around to introducing the Swami. He said, "We are the moons to the Swami's sun." He introduced him in that way. The Swami got up and talked. I didn't know what to think about it. At that time, the only steps I had taken in regard to Indian teaching were through Ramakrishna, but this was the first time, to my knowledge, that bhakti religion had come to America.

Bill Epstein, quite in contrast to Robert Nelson, was a dashing, romantic person, with long, wavy dark hair and a beard. He was good looking and effervescent and took upon himself a role of informing people at the restaurant of the city's spiritual news. Once he became interested in the new swami, he made the Swami an ongoing topic of conversation at the restaurant.

Bill: I went in the back, and I asked Richard, the manager, "I'm going to take some food to the Swami. You don't mind, do you?" He said, "No. Take anything you want." So I took some brown rice and other stuff, and I brought it up there.

I went upstairs, and I knocked on the door, and there was no answer. I knocked again, and I saw that the light was on—because it had a glass panel—and finally he answered. I was really scared, because I had never really accepted any teacher. He said, "Come in! Come in! Sit down." We started talking, and he said to me, "The first thing that people do when they meet is to show each other love. They exchange names, they exchange something to eat." So he gave me a slice of apple, and he showed me the tape recorder he had, probably for recording his chants. Then he said, "Have you ever chanted?" I said, "No, I haven't chanted before." So he played a chant, and then he spoke to me some more. He said, "You must come back." I said, "Well, if I come back I'll bring you some more food."

James Greene, a thirty-year-old carpentry teacher at Cooper Union, was delving into Eastern philosophy. He lived on the same block as the Paradox and began hearing about the Swami from Harvey Cohen and Bill Epstein while regularly taking his evening meal at the restaurant.

James: It was really Harvey and Bill who got things going. I remember one evening at Mishra's in which Swamiji was only a presence but did not speak. Mishra's students seemed more into the bodily aspect of yoga. This seemed to be one of Swamiji's complaints.

His room on Seventy-second Street was quite small. He was living in a fairly narrow room with a door on the one end. Swamiji would set himself up along one side, and we were rather closely packed. It may have been no more than eight feet wide, and it was rather dim. He sat on his thin mattress, and then we sat on the floor.

We wouldn't chant. We would just come, and he would lecture. There was no direction other than the lecture on the Bhagavad-gītā. I had read a lot of literature, and in my own shy way I was looking for a master, I think. I have no aggression in me or go-getting quality. I was really just a listener, and this seemed right—hearing the Bhagavad-gītā—so I kept coming. It just seemed as if things would grow from there. More and more people began coming. Then it got crowded, and he had to find another place.

The new group from the Paradox was young and hip, in contrast to the older, more conservative uptown people who had been attending Prabhupāda's classes. In those days, it was still unusual to see a person with long hair and a beard, and when such people started coming to the Swami's meetings on the West Side, some of the older people were alarmed. As one of them noted: "Swami Bhaktivedanta began to pick up another kind of people. He picked them up at the Bowery or some attics. And they came with funny hats and gray blankets wrapped around themselves, and they startled me."

David Allen, a twenty-one-year-old seeker who came up from the Paradox, had just moved to the city, optimistically attracted by what he had read about experimentation with drugs. He saw the old group as "a kind of fussy budgety group of older women on the West Side" listening to the Swami's lectures.

David: We weren't known as hippies then. But it was strange for the people who had originally been attracted to him. It was different for them to relate to this new group. I think most of the teachers from India up to that time had older followers, and sometimes wealthy widows would provide a source of income. But Swamiji changed right away to the younger, poorer group of people. The next thing that happened was that Bill Epstein and others began talking about how it would be better for the Swami to come downtown to the Lower East Side. Things were really happening down there, and somehow they weren't happening uptown. People downtown really needed him. Downtown was right, and it was ripe. There was life down there. There was a lot of energy going around.

SPL 17: On the Bowery

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

On the Bowery

I couldn't understand the difference between friends and enemies. My friend was shocked to hear that I was moving to the Bowery, but although I passed through many dangers, I never thought that "This is danger." Everywhere I thought, "This is my home."

—Śrīla Prabhupāda in conversation

= April 1966

Someone broke into room 307 while Śrīla Prabhupāda was out and stole his typewriter and tape recorder. When Prabhupāda returned to the building, the janitor informed him of the theft: an unknown burglar had broken the transom glass, climbed through, taken the valuables, and escaped. As Prabhupāda listened, he became convinced that the janitor himself was the culprit. Of course, he couldn't prove it, so he accepted the loss with disappointment. Some friends offered replacements for his old typewriter and tape recorder.

In a letter to India, he described the theft as a loss of more than one thousand rupees (\$157.00).

It is understood that such crime as has been committed in my room is very common in New York. This is the way of material nature. American people have everything in ample, and the worker gets about Rs. 100 as daily wages. And still there are thieves for want of character. The social condition is not very good.

Prabhupāda had told Joseph Foerster, the Scindia ticket agent, that he would be returning to India in a couple of months. That was seven months ago. Now, for the first time since his arrival, Prabhupāda had returned to the Scindia ticket office in Brooklyn. He talked about the theft to Mr. Foerster, who responded with, "Welcome to the club," and told Prabhupāda about the recent theft of his own automobile. Such things, he explained, were not unusual for New York City. He told Prabhupāda of the dangers of the city and how to avoid thefts and muggings. Prabhupāda listened, shaking his head. He told Mr. Foerster that American young people were misguided and confused. He discussed his plans for returning to India and showed Mr. Foerster one of his Bhāgavatams.

Prabhupāda had lost his spirit for living in room 307. What would prevent the janitor from stealing again? Harvey Cohen and Bill Epstein had advised him to relocate downtown and had assured him of a more interesting following among the young people there. It had been an attractive proposal, and he began to reconsider it. Then Harvey offered Prabhupāda his studio on the Bowery.

Harvey had been working as a commercial artist for a Madison Avenue advertising firm when a recently acquired inheritance had spurred him to move into a loft on the Bowery to pursue his own career as a painter. But he was becoming disillusioned with New York. A group of acquaintances addicted to heroin had been coming around and taking advantage of his generosity, and his loft had recently been burglarized. He decided to leave the city and go to California, but before leaving he offered his loft for Prabhupāda to share with David Allen.

David Allen had heard that Harvey Cohen was moving to San Francisco if he could sublet his A.I.R. loft. Harvey hadn't known David very long, but on the night before Harvey was supposed to leave, he coincidentally met David three different times in three different places on the Lower East Side. Harvey took this as a sign that he should rent the loft to David, but he specifically stipulated that the Swami should move in too.

As Prabhupāda was preparing to leave his Seventy-second Street address, an acquaintance, an electrician who worked in the building, came to warn him. The Bowery was no place for a gentleman, he protested. It was the most corrupt place in the world. Prabhupāda's things had been stolen from room 307, but moving to the Bowery was not the answer.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda's new home, the Bowery, had a long history. In the early 1600s, when Manhattan was known as New Amsterdam and was controlled by the Dutch West India Company, Peter Minuit, the governor of New Netherland, staked out a north-south road that was called "the Bowery" because a number of bouwerries, or farms, lay on either side. It was a dusty country road, lined with quaint Dutch cottages and bordered by the peach orchards growing in the estate of Peter Stuyvesant. It became part of the high road to Boston and was of strategic importance during the American Revolution as the only land entrance to New York City.

In the early 1800s the Bowery was predominated by German immigrants, later in the century it became predominantly Jewish, and gradually it became the city's center of theatrical life. However, as a history of Lower Manhattan describes, "After 1870 came the period of the Bowery's celebrated degeneration. Fake auction rooms, saloons specializing in five-cent whiskey and knock-out drops, sensational dime museums, filthy and rat-ridden stale beer dives, together with Charles M. Hoyte's song, "The Bowery! The Bowery!—I'll Never Go There Any More!" fixed it forever in the nation's consciousness as a place of unspeakable corruption."

The reaction of Prabhupāda's electrician friend was not unusual. The Bowery is still known all over the world as Skid Row, a place of ruined and homeless alcoholics. Perhaps the uptown electrician had done business in the Bowery and had seen the derelicts sitting around passing a bottle or lying unconscious in the gutter, or staggering up to passersby and drunkenly bumping into them to ask for money.

Most of the Bowery's seven or eight thousand homeless men slept in lodging houses that required them to vacate their rooms during the day. Having nowhere else to go and nothing else to do, they would loiter on the street—standing silently on the sidewalks, leaning against a wall, or shuffling slowly along, alone or in groups. In cold weather they would wear two coats and several suits of clothes at once and would sometimes warm themselves around a fire they would keep going in a city garbage can. At night, those without lodging slept on the sidewalks, doorsteps, and street corners, crawled into discarded boxes, or sprawled side by side next to the bars. Thefts were commonplace; a man's pockets might be searched ten or twenty times while he slept. The rates of hospitalization and death in the Bowery were five times higher than the national average, and many of the homeless men bore marks of recent injuries or violence.

Prabhupāda's loft, 94 Bowery, was six blocks south of Houston Street. At Houston and Bowery, derelicts converged in the heavy crosstown traffic. When cars stopped for the light, bums would come up and wash the windshields and ask for money. South of Houston, the first blocks held mostly restaurant supply stores, lamp stores, taverns, and luncheonettes. The buildings were of three and four stories—old, narrow, crowded tenements, their faces covered with heavy fire escapes. Traffic on the Bowery ran uptown and downtown. Cars parked on both sides of the street, and the constant traffic passed tightly. During the business day, working people passed briskly among the slow-moving derelicts. Many of the store windows were covered with protective iron gates, but behind the gates the store-owners lit their varieties of lamps to attract prospective wholesale and retail customers.

Ninety-four Bowery was just two doors north of Hester Street. The corner was occupied by the spacious Half Moon Tavern, which was frequented mostly by neighborhood alcoholics. Above the tavern sat a four-story Bowery flophouse, marked by a neon sign—Palma House—which was covered by a protective metal cage and hung from the second floor on large chains. The hotel's entrance at 92 Bowery (which had no lobby but only a desolate hallway covered with dirty white tiles) was no more than six feet from the entrance to 94.

Ninety-four Bowery was a narrow four-story building. It had long ago been painted gray and bore the usual facing of a massive, black fire escape. A well-worn, black double door, its glass panels reinforced with chicken wire, opened onto the street. The sign above the door read, "A.I.R. 3rd & 4th," indicating that artists-in-residence occupied those floors.

The first floor of the next building north, 96 Bowery, was used for storage, and its front entrance was covered with a rusty iron gate. At 98 Bowery was another tavern—Harold's—smaller and dingier than the Half Moon. Thus the block consisted of two saloons, a flophouse, and two buildings with lofts.

In the 1960s, loft-living was just beginning in that area of New York City. The City had given permission for painters, musicians, sculptors, and other artists (who required more space than available in most apartments) to live in buildings that had been constructed as factories in the nineteenth century. After these abandoned factories had been fitted with fireproof doors, bathtubs, shower stalls, and heating, an artist could in expensively use a large space. These were the A.I.R. lofts.

Harvey Cohen's loft, on the top floor of 94 Bowery, was an open space almost a hundred feet long (from east to west) and twenty-five feet wide. It received a good amount of sunlight on the east, the Bowery side, and it also had windows at the west end, as well as a skylight. The exposed rafters of the ceiling were twelve feet above the floor.

Harvey Cohen had used the loft as an art studio, and racks for paintings still lined the walls. A kitchen and shower were partitioned off in the northwest corner, and a room divider stood about fifteen feet from the Bowery-side windows. This divider did not run from wall to wall, but was open at both ends, and it was several feet short of the ceiling.

It was behind this partition that Prabhupāda had his personal living area. A bed and a few chairs stood near the window, and Prabhupāda's typewriter sat on his metal trunk next to the small table that held his stacks of Bhāgavatam manuscripts. His dhotīs hung drying on a clothesline.

On the other side of the partition was a dais, about ten feet wide and five feet deep, on which Prabhupāda sat during his kīrtanas and lectures. The dais faced west, toward the loft's large open space—open, that is, except for a couple of rugs and an old-fashioned solid wood table and, on an easel, Harvey's painting of Lord Caitanya dancing with His associates.

The loft was a four-flight walk up, and the only entrance, usually heavily bolted, was a door in the rear, at the west end. From the outside, this door opened into a hallway, lit only by a red EXIT light over the door. The hallway led to the right a few steps and into the open area. If a guest entered during a kīrtana or a lecture, he would see the Swami about thirty feet from the entrance, seated on his dais. On other evenings the whole loft would be dark but for the glow of the red EXIT light in the little hallway and a soft illumination radiating from the other side of the partition, where Prabhupāda was working.

Prabhupāda lived on the Bowery, sitting under a small light, while hundreds of derelicts also sat under hundreds of naked lights on the same city block. He had no more fixed income than the derelicts, nor any greater security of a fixed residence, yet his consciousness was different. He was translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam into English, speaking to the world through his Bhaktivedanta purports. His duty, whether on the fourteenth floor of a Riverside Drive apartment building or in a corner of a Bowery loft, was to establish Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the prime necessity for all humanity. He went on with his translating and with his constant vision of a Kṛṣṇa temple in New York City. Because his consciousness was absorbed in Kṛṣṇa's universal mission, he did not depend on his surroundings for shelter. Home for him was not a matter of bricks and wood, but of taking shelter of Kṛṣṇa in every circumstance. As Prabhupāda had said to his friends uptown, "Everywhere is my home," whereas without Kṛṣṇa's shelter the whole world would be a desolate place.

Often he would refer to a scriptural statement that people live in three different modes: goodness, passion, and ignorance. Life in the forest is in the mode of goodness, life in the city is in passion, and life in a degraded place like a liquor shop, a brothel, or the Bowery is in the mode of ignorance. But to live in a temple of Viṣṇu is to live in the spiritual world, Vaikuṇṭha, which is transcendental to all three material modes.

And this Bowery loft where Prabhupāda was holding his meetings and performing kīrtana was also transcendental. When he was behind the partition, working in his corner before the open pages of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, that room was as good as his room back at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana.

News of the Swami's move to the Bowery loft spread, mostly by word of mouth at the Paradox restaurant, and people began to come by in the evening to chant with him. The musical kīrtanas were especially popular on the Bowery, since the Swami's new congregation consisted mostly of local musicians and artists, who responded more to the transcendental music than to the philosophy. Every morning he would hold a class on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, attended by David Allen, Robert Nelson, and an other boy, and occasionally he would teach cooking to whoever was

interested. He was usually available for personal talks with any inquiring visitors or with his new roommate.

Although Prabhupāda and David each had a designated living area in the large loft, the entire place soon became dominated by Prabhupāda's preaching activities. Prabhupāda and David got on well together, and at first Prabhupāda considered David an aspiring disciple.

April 27

He wrote to his friends in India, describing his relationship with David Allen.

He was attending my class at Seventy-second Street along with others, and when I experienced this theft case in my room, he invited me to his residence. So I am with him and training him. He has good prospect because already he has given up all bad habits. In this country, illicit connection with women, smoking, drinking, and eating of meats are common affairs. Besides that, there are other bad habits, like using [only] toilet paper [and not bathing] after evacuating, etc. But by my request he has given up ninety percent of his old habits, and he is chanting maha mantra regularly. So I am giving him the chance, and I think he is improving. Tomorrow I have arranged for some prasadam distribution, and he has gone to purchase some things from the market.

When David first came to the Bowery, he appeared like a clean-cut college student. He was twenty-one, six feet tall, blue-eyed, handsome, and intelligent-looking. Most of his new friends in New York were older and considered him a kid. David's family lived in East Lansing, Michigan, and his mother was paying one hundred dollars monthly to sublease the loft. Although he did not have much experience, he had read that a new realm of mind expansion was available through psychedelic drugs, and he was heading fast into the hazardous world of LSD. His meeting with the Swami came at a time of radical change and profoundly affected his life.

David: It was a really good relationship I had with the Swami, but I was overwhelmed by the tremendous energy of being that close to him. It spurred my consciousness very fast. Even my dreams at night would be so vivid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I was often sleeping when the Swami was up, because he was up late in the night working on his translations. That's possibly where a lot of the consciousness and dreams just flowed in, because of that deep relationship. It also had to do with studying Sanskrit. There was a lot of immediate impact with the language. The language seemed to have such a strong mystical quality, the way he translated it word for word.

Prabhupāda's old friend from uptown, Robert Nelson, continued to visit him on the Bowery. He was impressed by Prabhupāda's friendly relationship with David, who he saw was learning many things from the Swami. Mr. Robert bought a small American-made hand organ, similar to an Indian harmonium, and donated it to David for chanting with Prabhupāda. At seven in the morning Mr. Robert would come by, and after Bhāgavatam class he would talk informally with Prabhupāda, telling his ideas for making records and selling books. He wanted to continue helping the Swami. They would sit in chairs near the front window, and Mr. Robert would listen while Prabhupāda talked for hours about Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya.

New people began coming to see Prabhupāda on the Bowery. Carl Yeargens, a thirty-year-old black man from the Bronx, had attended Cornell University and was now independently studying Indian religion and Zen Buddhism. He had experimented with drugs as “psychedelic tools,” and he had an interest in the music and poetry of India. He was influential among his friends and tried to interest them in meditation. He had even been dabbling in Sanskrit.

Carl: I had just finished reading a book called *The Wonder That Was India*. I had gotten the definition of a sannyāsī and a brahmacārī and so forth. There was a vivid description in that particular book of how you could see a sannyāsī coming down the road with his saffron robe. It must have made more than just a superficial impression on me, because it came to me this one chilly evening. I was going to visit Michael Grant—probably going to smoke some marijuana and sit around, maybe play some music—and I was coming down Hester Street. If you make a left on Bowery, you can go up to Mike's place on Grand Street. But it's funny that I chose to go that way, because the shorter way would have been to go down Grand Street. But if I had gone that way, I would probably have missed Swamiji.

So I decided to go down Hester and then make a left. All of a sudden I saw in this dingy alcove a brilliant saffron robe. As I passed, I saw it was Swamiji knocking on the door, trying to gain entrance. There were two bums hunched up against the door. It was like a two-part door—one of them was sealed, and the other was locked. The two bums were lying on either side of Swamiji. One of these men had actually expired—which often happened, and you had to call the police or health department to get them.

I don't think I saw the men lying in the doorway until I walked up to Swamiji and asked him, “Are you a sannyāsī?” And he answered, “Yes.” We started this conversation about how he was starting a temple, and he mentioned Lord Caitanya and the whole thing. He just came out with this flow of strange things to me, right there in the street. But I knew what he was talking about somehow. I had the familiarity of having just read this book and delved into Indian religion. So I knew that this was a momentous occasion for me, and I wanted to help him. We banged on the door, and eventually we got into the loft. He invited me to come to a kīrtana, and I came back later that night for my first kīrtana. From that point on, it was a fairly regular thing—three times a week. At one point Swamiji asked me to stay with him, and I stayed for about two weeks.

It was perhaps because of Carl's interest in Sanskrit that Prabhupāda began holding Sanskrit classes. Carl and David and a few others would spend hours learning Sanskrit under Prabhupāda's guidance. Using a chalkboard he found in the loft, Prabhupāda taught the alphabet, and his students wrote their exercises in notebooks. Prabhupāda would look over their shoulders to see if they were writing correctly and would review their pronunciation. His students were learning not simply Sanskrit but the instructions of Bhagavad-gītā. Each day he would give them a verse to copy in the Sanskrit alphabet (devanāgarī), transliterate into the roman alphabet, and then translate word for word into English. But their interest in Sanskrit waned, and Prabhupāda gradually gave up the daily classes to spend time working on his own translations of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

His new friends may have regarded these lessons as Sanskrit classes, but actually they were bhakti classes. He had not come to America as the ambassador of Sanskrit; his Guru Mahārāja had ordered him to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But since he had found in Carl and some of his friends a desire

to investigate Sanskrit, he encouraged it. As a youth, Lord Caitanya had also started a Sanskrit school, with the real purpose of teaching love of Kṛṣṇa. He would teach in such a way that every word meant Kṛṣṇa, and when His students objected He closed the school. Similarly, when Prabhupāda found that his students' interest in Sanskrit was transitory—and since he himself had no mission on behalf of Sanskrit linguistics—he gave it up.

By the standard of classical Vedic scholars, it takes ten years for a boy to master Sanskrit grammar. And if one does not start until his late twenties or thirties, it is usually too late. Certainly none of Swamiji's students were thinking of entering a ten-year concentration in Sanskrit grammar, and even if they were, they would not realize spiritual truth simply by becoming grammarians.

Prabhupāda thought it better to utilize his own Sanskrit scholarship in translating the verses of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam into English, following the Sanskrit commentaries of the previous authorities. Otherwise, the secrets of Kṛṣṇa consciousness would remain locked away in the Sanskrit. Teaching Carl Yeargens devanāgarī, sandhi, verb conjugations, and noun declensions was not going to give the people of America transcendental Vedic knowledge. Better that he utilize his proficiency in Sanskrit for translating many volumes of the Bhāgavatam into English for millions of potential readers.

Carol Bekar came from an immigrant Catholic background, and she immediately associated with Catholicism the Swami's presence as a spiritual authority and his devotional practices of chanting on beads and reciting from Sanskrit scriptures. Sometimes she would accompany Prabhupāda to nearby Chinatown, where he would purchase ingredients for his cooking. He would cook daily, and sometimes Carol and others would come by to learn the secrets of cooking for Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Carol: He used to cook with us in the kitchen, and he was always aware of everyone else's activities in addition to his own cooking. He knew exactly how things should be. He washed everything and made sure everyone did everything correctly. He was a teacher. We used to make capātis by hand, but then one day he asked me to get him a rolling pin. I brought my rolling pin, and he appropriated it. He put some men on rolling capātis and supervised them very carefully.

I made a chutney for him at home. He always accepted our gifts graciously, although I don't think he ever ate them. Perhaps he was worried we might put in something that wasn't allowed in his diet. He used to take things from me and put them in the cupboard. I don't know what he finally did with them, but I am sure he didn't throw them away. I never saw him eat anything that I had prepared, although he accepted everything.

Prabhupāda held his evening meetings on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, just as he had uptown. The loft was out of the way for most of his acquaintances and it was on the Bowery. A cluster of sleeping derelicts regularly blocked the street-level entrance, and visitors would find as many as half a dozen bums to step over before climbing the four flights of stairs. But it was something new; you could go and sit with a group of hip people and watch the Swami lead kīrtana. The room was dimly lit, and Prabhupāda would burn incense. Many casual visitors came and went. One of them—Gunther—had vivid impressions.

Gunther: You walked right off the Bowery into a room filled with incense. It was quiet. Everyone was talking in hushed tones, not really talking at all. Swamiji was sitting in the front of the room, and in meditation. There was a tremendous feeling of peace which I have never had before. I'd happened to have studied for two years to become a minister and was into meditation, study, and prayer. But this was my first time to do anything Eastern or Hindu. There were lots of pillows around and mats on the floor for people to sit on. I don't think there were any pictures or statues. It was just Swamiji, incense, and mats, and obviously the respect of the people in the room for him.

Before we went up, Carl was laughing and saying how Swami wanted everyone to use the hand cymbals just correctly. I had never played the cymbals before, but when it began I just tried to follow Swamiji, who was doing it in a certain way. Things were building up, the sound was building up, but then someone was doing it wrong. And Swamiji just very, very calmly shook a finger at someone and they looked, and then everything stopped. He instructed this person from a distance, and this fellow got the right idea, and they started up again. After a few minutes... the sound of the cymbals and the incense... we weren't in the Bowery any longer. We started chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. That was my first experience in chanting—I'd never chanted before. There's nothing in Protestant religion that comes even close to that. Maybe Catholics with their Hail Marys, but it's not quite the same thing. It was relaxing and very interesting to be able to chant, and I found Swamiji very fascinating.

The loft was more open than Prabhupāda's previous place uptown, so there was less privacy. And here some of the visitors were skeptical and even challenging, but everyone found him confident and joyful. He seemed to have far-reaching plans, and he had dedication. He knew what he wanted to do and was single-handedly carrying it out. "It is not one man's job," he had said. But he went on doing all he could, depending on Kṛṣṇa for the results. David was beginning to help, and more people were coming by to visit him.

Almost all of Prabhupāda's Bowery friends were musicians or friends of musicians. They were into music—music, drugs, women, and spiritual meditation. Because Prabhupāda's presentation of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra was both musical and meditative, they were automatically interested. Prabhupāda stressed that all the Vedic mantras (or hymns) were sung—in fact, the words Bhagavad-gītā meant "The Song of God." But the words of the Vedic hymns were incarnations of God in the form of transcendental sound. The musical accompaniment of hand cymbals, drum, and harmonium was just that—an accompaniment—and had no spiritual purpose independent of the chanting of the name of God. Prabhupāda allowed any instrument to be used, as long as it did not detract from the chanting.

Carol: It was a very interracial, music-oriented scene. There were a few professional musicians, and a lot of people who enjoyed playing or just listening. Some people were painting in some of the lofts, and that's basically what was going on. We had memorable kīrtanas. One time there was a beautiful ceremony. Some of us went over early to prepare for it. There must have been a hundred people who came that day.

For the Bowery crowd, sound was spirit and spirit was sound, in a merging of music and meditation. But for Prabhupāda, music without the name of God wasn't meditation; it was sense gratification, or at most a kind of stylized impersonal meditation. But he was glad to see the

musicians coming to play along in his kīrtanas, to hear him, and to chant responsively. Some, having stayed up all night playing somewhere on their instruments, would come by in the morning and sing with the Swami. He did not dissuade them from their focus on sound; rather, he gave them sound. In the Vedas, sound is said to be the first element of material creation; the source of sound is God, and God is eternally a person. Prabhupāda's emphasis was on getting people to chant God's personal, transcendental name. Whether they took it as jazz, folk music, rock, or Indian meditation made no difference, as long as they began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Carol: Whenever he had the chanting, the people were fairly in awe of the Swami. On the Bowery, a kind of transcendence came out of the ringing of the cymbals. He used the harmonium, and many people played hand cymbals. Sometimes he played the drum. In the very beginning, he stressed the importance of sound and the realization of Godhead through sound. That was, I suppose, the attraction that these musicians found in him—the emphasis on sound as a means to attaining transcendence and the Godhead. But he wanted a serious thing. He was interested in discipleship.

One serious newcomer was Michael Grant. Mike was twenty-four. His father, who was Jewish, owned a record shop in Portland, Oregon, where Mike grew up. After studying music at Portland's Reed College and at San Francisco State, Mike, who played the piano and many other instruments, moved to New York City, along with his girl friend, hoping to get into music professionally. But he quickly became disenchanted with the commercial music scene. Playing in nightclubs and pandering to commercial demands seemed particularly unappealing. In New York he joined the musicians' union and worked as a musical arranger and as an agent for several local groups.

Mike lived on the Bowery in an A.I.R. loft on Grand Street. It was a large loft where musicians often congregated for jam sessions. But as he turned more and more to serious composing, he found himself retiring from the social side of the music scene. His interests ran more to the spiritual, quasi-spiritual, and mystical books he had been reading. He had encountered several swamis, yogīs, and self-styled spiritualists in the city and had taken up haṭha-yoga. From his first meeting with the Swami, Mike was interested and quite open, as he was with all religious persons. He thought all genuinely religious people were good, although he did not care to identify with any particular group.

Mike: There was a little bit of familiarity because I had seen other swamis. The way he was dressed, the way he looked—older and swarthy—weren't new to me. But at the same time there was an element of novelty. I was very curious. I didn't hear him talk when I first came in—he was just chanting—but mainly I was waiting to hear what he was going to say. I had already heard people chant before. I thought, why else would he put himself in such a place, without any comforts, unless the message he's trying to get across is more important than his own comfort? I think the thing that struck me the most was the poverty that was all around him. This was curious, because the places that I had been before had been just the opposite—very opulent. There was a Vedānta center in upper Manhattan, and others. They were filled with staid, older men with their leather chairs and pipe tobacco—that kind of environment. But this was real poverty. The whole thing was curious.

The Swami looked very refined, which was also curious—that he was in this place. When he talked, I immediately saw that he was a scholar and that he spoke with great conviction. Some statements

he made were very daring. He was talking about God, and this was all new—to hear someone talk about God. I always wanted to hear someone I could respect talk about God. I always liked to hear religious speakers, but I measured them very carefully. When he spoke, I began to think, "Well, here is someone talking about God who may really have some realization of God." He was the first one I had come across who might be a person of God, who could feel really deeply.

* * *

Prabhupāda is lecturing.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is just trying to place Arjuna on the platform of working in pure consciousness. We have already discussed for so many days that we are not this dull body but we are consciousness. Somehow or other we are in contact with matter. Therefore our freedom is checked.

Attendance is better now than it had been uptown. The loft offers a larger space; in fact, the platform where Prabhupāda sits nearly equals the area of his entire office cubicle on Seventy-second Street. The dingy loft with its unpainted rafters is more like an old warehouse than a temple. The members of his audience, most of them musicians, have come to meditate on the mystical sounds of the Swami's kīrtana.

Carl, Carol, Gunther, Mike, David, the crowd from the Paradox, and others join him on Monday, Wednesday and Friday night, when he holds classes beginning punctually at eight o'clock. The program consists of half an hour of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa followed by a lecture from Bhagavad-gītā (usually forty-five minutes long), then a question-and answer period, and finally another half hour of chanting, everything ending by ten o'clock.

The kīrtana has just ended, and Swamiji is speaking.

As spiritual beings we are free to act, free to have anything. Pure, no contamination—no disease, no birth, no death, no old age. And besides that, we have got many, many other qualifications in our spiritual life.

When he speaks he is pure spiritual form. The Vedic scriptures say that a sādhu, a saint, is not seen but heard. If the people in the audience want to know Swamiji, they will have to hear him. He is no longer simply the old Indian immigrant who lives on the other side of the partition of this loft, hanging his clothes to dry, barely getting his meals.

But now he is speaking as the emissary of Lord Kṛṣṇa, beyond time and space, and hundreds of spiritual masters in the chain of disciplic succession are speaking through him. He has entered amid New York's Bohemians in 1966 saying that 1966 is temporary and illusory, that he is eternal and they are eternal. This was the meaning of the kīrtana, and now he is explaining it philosophically, advocating a total change in consciousness. Yet, knowing that they can't take it all, he urges them to take whatever they can.

You will be glad to hear that this process of spiritual realization, once begun, guarantees one to have his next life as a human being. Once karma-yoga is begun it will continue. It doesn't matter—

even if one fails to complete the course, still he is not loser, he is not loser. Now, if someone begins this yoga of self-realization but unfortunately cannot prosecute this task in a nice way—if he falls down from the path—still there is encouragement that you are not a loser. You will be given a chance next life, and the next life is not ordinary next life. And for one who is successful—oh, what to speak of him! The successful goes back to Godhead. So we are holding this class, and although you have multifarious duties, you come here thrice a week and try to understand. And this will not go in vain. Even if you stop coming here, that impression will never go. I tell you, the impression will never go. If you do some practical work, that is very, very nice. But even if you do not do any practical work, simply if you give your submissive aural reception and understand what is the nature of God—if you simply hear and have an idea even—then you will be free from this material bondage.

He is talking to a crowd who are deeply set in their hip life. He knows that they can't immediately give up taking drugs, and there they sit with their common-law wives. Their path is to play music, live with a woman, and meditate sometimes. And be free. After hearing his lecture they'll stay up all night with their instruments, their women, their drugs, their interracial Bohemian scene. Yet somehow they are drawn to Swamiji. He's got the good vibrations of the kīrtana, and they want to help him out. They're glad to help, because he has no one else. So Prabhupāda is saying to them, "That's all right. Even if you can only do a little, it will be good for you. We are all pure spirit souls. But you have forgotten. You have fallen into the cycle of birth and death. Whatever you can do toward reviving your original consciousness is good for you. There is no loss."

The Swami's main stress is on what he calls "dovetailing your consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness."...Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Consciousness. And Arjuna, as the representative individual consciousness, is asked to act intelligently in collaboration with the Supreme Consciousness. Then he will be free from the bondage of birth, death, old age, and disease.

Consciousness is a popular word in America. There's consciousness expansion, cosmic consciousness, altered states of consciousness, and now—dovetailing the individual Consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness. This is the perfection of consciousness, Prabhupāda explains. This is the love and peace that everyone is really after. And yet Prabhupāda talks of it in terms of war.

They are talking on the battlefield, and Arjuna says, "I will not fight. I will not fight with my relatives and brothers for the sake of achieving some kingdom. No, no." Now, to the ordinary man it appears that, "Oh, Arjuna is a very nice man, nonviolent. He has given up everything for the sake of his relatives. Oh, what a nice man he is." This is the ordinary calculation.

But what does Kṛṣṇa say? He says, "You are damned fool number one." Now just see. The things which are estimated in the public eye as very nice, very good, that is here condemned by God. So you have to see whether the Supreme Consciousness is pleased with your actions. And Arjuna's action was not approved by Lord Kṛṣṇa. It was for his own whim, sense gratification, that at first he would not fight—but in the end, for Kṛṣṇa's satisfaction, he did fight. And that is our perfection—when we act for the satisfaction of the Supreme Consciousness.

At this point, some in the audience are filled with reservations. They are all opposed to the role of the United States in Vietnam, and this idea is very difficult for them. Like Arjuna, they want peace. So why is a swami sanctioning war?

He explains: Yes, Arjuna's idea not to fight is good, but then Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Consciousness, instructs him to fight anyway. Therefore, Arjuna's fighting is above mundane ethics. It is absolute. If we follow Arjuna, give up good and bad, and act for Kṛṣṇa, not for our sense gratification, then that is perfect—because Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Consciousness.

To some in his audience, although his answer seems philosophically sound, it's not quite what they want to hear. Still, they want to know his political views. Does he support America's involvement in Vietnam? Is he antiwar? But Prabhupāda is neither hawk nor dove. He has no political motive behind his example of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. His theme is simple and pure: beyond the good and the bad is the Absolute, and to act in accord with the Absolute is also beyond good and bad.

But what about Vietnam—does Kṛṣṇa say to fight there? No, Swamiji answers. The Vietnam war is different from the Kurukṣetra war. In the battle of Kurukṣetra, Kṛṣṇa was personally present asking Arjuna to fight. Vietnam is different.

But his audience has yet another objection: If he is not addressing the Vietnamese war, then why not? After all, this is 1966. If he isn't talking about the war, then what is his relevancy? The Swami replies that his message is actually the most urgent and relevant. The Vietnamese war was an inevitable karmic reaction; it was one symptom, not the whole problem. And only this philosophy—surrender to the Supreme Consciousness—addresses the real problem.

But for many the reference to fighting is so emotionally charged that they can't go beyond the immediate politics of Vietnam to Prabhupāda's real message of surrender to the Supreme Consciousness. They respect the Swami—they realize he's referring to a deeper philosophy—yet the story of Arjuna and the war makes things difficult. The Swami nonetheless continues to refer to Arjuna's fighting as the classic example of Bhagavad-gītā's basic teaching.

It's not the basic teaching his audience is having difficulty with. It's the example. Prabhupāda has deliberately handed his audience a volatile analogy. He hasn't come to join their peace movement, and he doesn't accept their shortsighted concept of peace. He confronts them: It is better to fight in Kṛṣṇa consciousness than to live in a so-called peace devoid of God realization. Yes, the example is hard for them to accept. It makes them think. And if they do accept, then they might come near to understanding the Absolute.

Is it very difficult, dovetailing our consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness? Not at all. Not at all! No sane man will say, "Oh, it is not possible."

He isn't suggesting that to dovetail with the Supreme Consciousness they will have to go fight in Vietnam or perform some other horrible act on behalf of God. He knows that spiritual life will have to be more attractive than material life, or his audience will never take to it. He wants to bring the theme of dovetailing with the Supreme Consciousness down to something practical, something all-attractive and beautiful, something anyone could do and would want to do. He wants to encourage

them by saying that they can do their own thing—but for Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna, after all, was a lifetime warrior. Kṛṣṇa didn't ask him to give up his work, but to do it for the Supreme. So Prabhupāda is asking the same of his audience. And they can begin with something as simple as offering their food to God.

Because everyone has to eat. So God wants to eat something. Why don't you first offer your food to God? Then you eat. But you may say, "But if God takes it away, then how shall I eat?" No, no. God will not take it. Daily, after preparing our foodstuffs, we are offering to Kṛṣṇa. There is a witness. Mr. David has seen. (Prabhupāda laughs.) God eats! But His spiritual eating is such that, even after His eating, the whole thing is still there.

So we shall not suffer a pinch if we dovetail our desires with the Supreme Lord. We simply have to learn the art—how to dovetail. Nothing has to be changed. The fighting man did not change into an artist or a musician. If you are a fighting man, you remain a fighting man. If you are a musician, you remain a musician. If you are a medical man, you remain a medical man. Whatever you are, you remain. But dovetail it. If by my eating the Lord is satisfied, then that is my perfection. If by my fighting the Lord is satisfied, then that is my perfection. So in every sphere of life we have to know whether the Lord is satisfied. That technique we have to learn. Then it is as easy as anything. We have to stop creating our own plans and thoughts and take the perfect plans from the Supreme Lord and execute them. That will become the perfection of our life.

And Lord Caitanya has made acting on the platform of consciousness very easy. Just as there are some note-makers of school books—Easy Study—so Lord Caitanya has recommended that you be engaged in whatever occupation, but just hear about Kṛṣṇa. Continue to hear the Bhagavad-gītā and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. It is for this that we are trying to organize this institution. So you have come, and whatever work you do, it doesn't matter. Everything will be adjusted by and by, as our mind becomes clear simply by hearing. If you continue this process, chanting the Kṛṣṇa name, you will practically see how much your heart is becoming clear and how much you are making progress toward spiritual realization, the real identity of pure consciousness.

Prabhupāda is speaking on behalf of the Supreme Consciousness, and he offers his day-to-day activities as an example of dovetailing with the Supreme.

I am here always working at something, reading or writing—some thing, reading or writing—twenty-four hours. Simply when I feel hungry, I take some food. And simply when I feel sleepy I go to bed. Otherwise, I don't feel fatigued. You can ask Mr. David whether I am not doing this.

Of course, the Swami's daily routine doesn't require certification from David Allen, and any of his regular visitors can see that he is transcendental. His personal life is a perfect example of dovetailing with the Supreme Consciousness. Prabhupāda has always kept himself dovetailed with the Supreme. He had been perfectly dovetailed in Vṛndāvana also and had no personal need or motive to come to America and live on the Bowery. It was for others' sake that he came to the Bowery, and it is for others' benefit that he is speaking tonight. His spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa want the conditioned souls to come out of their illusion before it is too late.

Speaking vigorously, even until he becomes physically exhausted—sometimes shouting, sometimes pleading, sometimes laughing—he gives his audience as much as he feels they can take. As the emissary of Kṛṣṇa and the disciplic succession, he can boldly shout that everyone should dovetail with the Supreme. He can speak as strongly as he likes for as long as they're willing to listen. He is a sādhu. (The Sanskrit word means “saint” and “one who cuts.”) And he repeats the same message that for thousands of years sādhus of the original Vedic culture have spoken. He is reviving the eternal spirit of the Vedic wisdom—to cut the knots of ignorance and illusion.

So everything is illusion. From the beginning of our birth. And that illusion is so strong it is very difficult to get out of. The whole thing is illusion. Birth is illusion. The body is illusion. The bodily relationship and the country are illusion. The father is illusion. The mother is illusion. The wife is illusion. The children are illusion. Everything is illusion. And we are contacting that illusion, thinking we are very learned, advanced. We are imagining so many things. But as soon as death comes—the actual fact—then we forget everything. We forget our country. We forget our relatives. We forget our wife, children, father, mother. Everything is gone.

* * *

Mike Grant: I went up to him afterward. I had the same feeling I'd had on other occasions when I'd been to hear famous people in concerts. I was always interested in going by after concerts to see musicians and singers just to meet them and see what they were like. I had a similar feeling after Swamiji spoke, so I went up and started talking. But the experience was different from the others in that he wasn't in a hurry. He could talk to me, whereas with others all you could do was get in a few words. They were always more interested in something else. But he was a person who was actually showing some interest in me as a person, and I was so overwhelmed that I ran out of things to say very quickly. I was surprised. Our meeting broke off on the basis of my not having anything further to say. It was just the opposite of so many other experiences, where some performer would be hurrying off to do something else. This time, I was the one who couldn't continue.

* * *

Prabhupāda liked to take walks. From his doorstep at 94 Bowery, he would see directly across the street the Fulton Hotel, a five-story flop-house. Surrounding him were other lower-Manhattan lodging houses, whose tenants wandered the sidewalks from early morning till dark. An occasional flock of pigeons would stir and fly from one rooftop to the next or descend to the street. Traffic was heavy. The Bowery was part of a truck route to and from Brooklyn by way of the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges.

The Bowery sloped gently downhill toward the north, and Prabhupāda could see signboards, a few scraggly Manhattan trees, and the street lights and traffic signals as far up as Fourth Street. He could see Con Edison, with its prominent clock tower, and (if there were no clouds) the top of the Empire State Building on Thirty-fourth Street.

He would walk alone in the morning through the Bowery neighborhood. The month of May that year saw more frequent rains than was normal, and Prabhupāda carried an umbrella. Sometimes he walked in the rain. He was not always alone; sometimes he walked with one of his new friends and

talked. Sometimes he shopped. Bitter melon, dāl, hiṅg, chick-pea flour, and other specialty foods common in Indian vegetarian cuisine were available in Chinatown's nearby markets. On leaving the loft, he would walk south a few steps to the corner of Bowery and Hester Street. Turning right on Hester, he would immediately be in Chinatown, where the shops, markets, and even the Manhattan Savings Bank were identified by signs lettered in Chinese. Sometimes he would walk one block further south to Canal Street, with its Central Asian Food Market and many other streetside fruit and vegetable markets. In the early morning the sidewalks were almost deserted, but as the shops began to open for business, the streets became crowded with local workers, shopkeepers, tourists, and aimless derelicts. The winding side streets of Chinatown were lined with hundreds of small stores, and parked cars lined both sides of the street.

His walks on Hester would sometimes take him into Little Italy, which overlaps Chinatown at Mulberry Street. In this neighborhood, places like Chinese Pork Products and the Mee Jung Mee Supermarket stood alongside Umberto's Clam House and the Puglia Restaurant, advertising capuccino a la puglia, coffee from Puglia.

His walks west of Bowery into Chinatown and Little Italy were mainly for shopping. But he also noted prospective sites for a temple; Chatham Tower on Chatham Square particularly drew his attention. Sometimes he would walk in the opposite direction as far as the East River and Brooklyn Bridge. But when a friend warned him that a sniper had been firing at strollers along the river, he stopped going there.

Despite the bad neighborhood where Prabhupāda lived and walked, he was rarely disturbed. Often he would find several Bowery bums asleep or unconscious at his door, and he would have to step over them. Sometimes a drunk, simply out of his inability to maneuver, would bump into him, or a derelict would mutter something unintelligible or laugh at him. The more sober ones would stand and gesture courteously, ushering the Swami into or out of his door at 94 Bowery. He would pass among them, acknowledging their good manners as they cleared his path.

Certainly few of the Bowery men and others who saw him on his walks knew much about the small, elderly Indian sādhu, dressed in saffron and carrying an umbrella and a brown grocery sack.

Sometimes Prabhupāda would meet one of his new friends on the street. Jan, Michael Grant's girl friend, met him on several occasions as he was out walking.

Jan: I would see him in the midst of this potpourri of people down there, walking down the street. He always had an umbrella, and he would always have such a serene look on his face. He would just be taking his afternoon jaunts, walking along, sometimes stepping over the drunks. And I would always get sort of nervous when I would meet him on the sidewalk. He would say, "Are you chanting?" and I would say, "Sometimes." And then he would say, "That's a good girl."

* * *

Sitting cross-legged, his back to the shelf with its assortment of potted plants, a whitish chādar wrapped in wide, loose folds across his body, Prabhupāda looked grave, almost sorrowful. The picture and an accompanying article appeared in a June issue of *The Village Voice*. The article read:

The meeting of the mystical West and practical East comes alive in the curious contrast between A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami and his American disciples. The swami, a cultivated man of seventy with a distinguished education, is here for a year to preach his gospel of peace, good will, nearness to God, and, more practically, to raise money for his American church... Like his teachings, the swami is sensible and direct. His main teaching is that mankind may come closer to God by reciting His holy name.

Despite the fact that the swami came to America to seek out the root of godless materialism—a disease, he said, that has already enveloped India—he is a realistic man. “If there is any place on earth with money to build a temple, it is here.” The swami wishes to found in America an International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which will be open for anyone—including women.

The article had been written by Howard Smith. He had first heard of the Swami by a phone call from a contact who had told him of an interesting holy man from India living in a loft in the Bowery. “Go there any time,” Howard’s contact had told him. “He’s always there. I think you will find it fascinating. I believe he’s about to start a major religious movement.”

Howard Smith: So I went down there and went upstairs into this very funky artists’ loft. There were carpets all over the place, old and worn out, and a lot of people sitting around in various kinds of hippie garb, plus what I think they must have thought was Indian garb. Most of them were sitting alone around the room facing the wall, like they had nothing to do with each other. They were sitting cross-legged, and each one seemed to be doing something different. Nobody paid any attention to me when I walked in.

I saw shoes lined up, and I thought, “Maybe I am supposed to take off my shoes,” but nobody said anything to me. So I walked around the edge of the carpet, looking for somebody to pay attention to me. I wondered what was going on, and I didn’t want to interrupt anybody, because they all seemed deep into whatever kind of prayers they were doing.

In the back of the loft I noticed a little curtain—an Indian madras type of curtain—and so I decided I’d peer into that area. I looked in, and there was Swami Bhaktivedanta sitting there cross-legged in saffron garments, with the markings on his forehead and nose and his hand in the bead bag. Even though he looked like the real thing, he seemed more approachable, and I said, “Hello,” and he looked up. I said, “Swami Bhaktivedanta?” and he said, “Yes.” I said, “I am Howard Smith.” I was expecting to sit down, so I said, “Excuse me, I have to take off my shoes,” and he said, “Why do you want to take off your shoes?” I said, “I don’t know—I saw all the shoes out there.” And he said, “I didn’t ask you to take your shoes off.” I said, “What are all those people out there doing?” and he said, “I don’t know. And they don’t know what they’re doing. I am trying to teach them, and they seem to be misunderstanding me. They are very confused people.”

Then we sat and talked, and I liked him a lot right away. I mean, I’d met a lot of other swamis, and I didn’t like them too much. And I don’t think it’s fair to lump them all together and say, “Those swamis in India.” Because he was very, very basic, and that’s what I seemed to like about him. He

not only made me feel at ease, but he seemed very open and honest—like he asked my advice on things. He was very new in the country.

I thought his ideas stood a good chance of taking hold, because he seemed so practical. His head didn't seem in the clouds. He wasn't talking mysticism every third word. I guess that is where his soul was at, but that isn't where his normal conversational consciousness was at.

Then he said several people had told him that the Voice would be a very good place to be written up and that basically it would reach the kind of people who already perhaps had a leaning or interest in what he was preaching. And I said that I thought he was correct. He asked me if I had read any books or knew anything about Indian culture, and I said no, I didn't really. We talked a little, and he explained to me that he had these books in English that he had already translated in India. And he handed those to me and said, "If you want more background, you can read these."

It was obvious to me that I was not talking to some fellow who had just decided that he had seen God and was going to tell people about it. He seemed to be an educated man, much more than myself, actually. And I liked his humbleness. I just plain liked the guy.

He explained everything I wanted to know—the significance of what he was wearing, the mark on his forehead, the bead bag. And I liked all his explanations. Everything was very practical. Then he talked about temples all over the world, and he said, "Well, we have got a long way to go. But I am very patient."

* * *

Prabhupāda had hope for what the Voice article had referred to as "his American church." There was life in his lectures and kīrtanas, and at least he was acquiring a small, regular following. But from India there was no hope. He had continued corresponding with Sumati Morarji, his Godbrothers, and the Indian Central Government, but their replies had not been encouraging.

In the faith that Padampat Singhanian would agree to his plans for a Kṛṣṇa temple in Manhattan and finance its construction, Prabhupāda had petitioned New Delhi to sanction the release of foreign exchange. He had written to the Reserve Bank of India, New Delhi.

I want to establish this cultural center, and for this I wish to get some exchange from India. I think there are good prospects all over the world for propagating the culture of how to love God in these days of forgetfulness.

A month later the Indian bank had advised him to resubmit his request, through the Indian Embassy in Washington, to the finance minister of the Indian Central Government. Prabhupāda had complied. And another month had passed, with no word from the government.

One of his Godbrothers had written that Swamiji should come back to India and work personally to get the government's sanction. But Prabhupāda didn't want to leave America now. He wrote to Sumati Morarji:

I am trying to avoid the journey to India and again coming back. Especially for the reason that I am holding at the above address classes thrice a week and training some American youth in the matter of sankirtan and devotional service to the Lord. Some of them are taking the lessons very sincerely and in the future they may be very good Vaiṣṇavas according to the rigid standards.

One day a curious, unsolicited correspondent wrote to Prabhupāda from India. His name was Mukti Brahmācārī. Introducing himself as a disciple of one of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers, and reminding Prabhupāda of their past slight acquaintance, Mukti wrote of his eagerness to join Prabhupāda in America. Certainly Prabhupāda still had hopes for getting assistance from his Godbrothers in India—"This mission is not simply one man's work." Therefore, he invited Mukti to come to America and asked him to request his guru to cooperate by working personally to secure government sanction for the release of foreign exchange. Mukti wrote back, reaffirming his eagerness but expressing doubt that his spiritual master would give him permission. Mukti thought he should first come to the United States and then request his spiritual master's help. Prabhupāda was annoyed, and he sent an immediate reply:

Is preaching in America my private business? Śrīla Prabhupad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati wanted to construct some temples in foreign countries as preaching centers of the message of Śrīla Rupa Raghunath,* and I am trying to do this in this part of the world. The money is ready and the opportunity is open. If by seeing the Finance Minister this work can be facilitated, why should we wait because you cannot talk with your Guru Maharaj about cooperation because you are afraid your journey will be cancelled? Please do not think in that way. Take everything as Śrīla [Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī] Prabhupad's work and try to do the needful. Do not think for a moment that my interest is different from that of your Guru Maharaj. We are executing the will of Śrīla Prabhupad according to our own capacity. A combined effort would have been far better.

Mukti submitted the entire proposal before his spiritual master, who, as Mukti predicted, canceled the trip. Although Mukti's guru was Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrother, he did not want to be involved, and he doubted that Prabhupāda would actually get a donation from Padampat Singhania.

And now Mukti Brahmācārī also doubted: "If your program is not bona fide, the approach to a big personality will be a ludicrous one no doubt."

On the same day that Prabhupāda received the "ludicrous" letter, he also received the final blow of noncooperation from the Indian government. Second Secretary Prakash Shah of the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C. wrote:

Due to existing conditions of foreign exchange stringency, it is not possible for the government of India to accede to your request for release of foreign exchange. You may perhaps like to raise funds from residents in America.

It was confirmed: Prabhupāda would have to work without outside help. He would continue alone in New York City. His last letter to Mukti Brahmācārī reveals his deep faith and determination.

So the controversy is now closed, and there is no need of help from anyone else. We are not always successful in our attempts at preaching work but such failures are certainly not ludicrous. In the

absolute field both success and failure are glorious. Even Lord Nityananda pretended to be a failure at converting Jagai and Madhai in the first attempt. Rather, He was personally injured in such an attempt. But that was certainly not ludicrous. The whole thing was transcendental, and it was glorious for all parties concerned.

If Kṛṣṇa consciousness were ever to take hold in America, it would have to be without assistance from the Indian government or Indian financiers. Not even a lone Indian brahmacārī would join him. Kṛṣṇa was revealing His plan to Prabhupāda in a different way. With the Singhanian-sanction schemes finished and behind him, Prabhupāda would turn all his energy toward the young men and women coming to him in his Bowery loft. He wrote to Sumati Morarji:

I am now trying to incorporate one corporation of the local friends and admirers under the name International Society for Krishna Consciousness, incorporated.

* * *

Of all his friends and admirers, Prabhupāda gave his roommate, David Allen, the most personal attention and training. He felt he was giving David a special chance to become America's first genuine Vaiṣṇava. Prabhupāda would eventually return to India, and he wanted to take David to Vṛndāvana. He would show him temple worship and train him for future preaching in the West. He had requested Sumati Morarji to provide free passage for David as well as for himself.

You will be pleased to see this American boy. He is coming of a good family and is a sincere soul to this line of culture. There are others also in the class I am holding here, but I wish to take with me only one of them.

I am very glad to say (Prabhupāda said one evening in his lecture) that our Mr. David says sometimes, "Swamiji, I want to increase my spiritual life immediately." (Prabhupāda laughed as he imitated David's urgency.) "Take patience, take patience," I tell him. "It will be done, of course. When you have got such desire, God will help you. He is within you. He is simply trying to see how sincere you are. Then He will give you all opportunities to increase your spiritual life."

At first David and the Swami lived together peacefully in the large hall, the Swami working concentratedly on his side of the partition, David ranging throughout the large open space. David, however, continued taking marijuana, LSD, and amphetamines, and Prabhupāda had no choice but to tolerate it. Several times he told David that drugs and hallucinations would not help his spiritual life, but David would look distracted. He was becoming estranged from the Swami.

But Prabhupāda had a plan to use the loft as a temple—to transform it into New York's first temple of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—and he wanted David's cooperation. Although the neighborhood was one of the most miserable in the world, Prabhupāda talked of bringing Deities from Jaipur or Vṛndāvana and starting temple worship, even on the Bowery. He thought David might help. After all, they were roommates, so there could be no question of David's not cooperating; but he would have to give up his bad habits.

Prabhupāda was trying to help David, but David was too disturbed. He was headed for disaster, and so were Prabhupāda's plans for the loft. Sometimes, even not under the influence of a drug, he would pace around the loft. Other times he appeared to be deep in thought. One day, on a dose of LSD, he went completely crazy. As Carl Yeargens put it, "He just flipped out, and the Swami had to deal with a crazy man." Things had been leading to this—"he was a crazy kid who always took too much"—but the real madness happened suddenly.

Swamiji was working peacefully at his typewriter when David "freaked out." David started moaning and pacing around the large open area of the loft. Then he began yelling, howling, and running all around. He went back to where the Swami was. Suddenly Prabhupāda found himself face to face not with David—nice David, whom he was going to take to India to show the brāhmaṇas in Vṛndāvana—but a drugged, wild-eyed stranger, a madman.

Prabhupāda tried to speak to him—"What is the matter?"—but David had nothing to say. There was no particular disagreement. Just madness...

Prabhupāda moved quickly down the four flights of stairs. He had not stopped to gather up any of his belongings or even to decide where he would go or whether he would return. There had been no time to consider anything. He had taken quite a shock, and now he was leaving the arena of David's madness. The usual group of bums were sitting in the doorway, and with their customary flourish of courtesy they allowed him to pass. They were used to the elderly swami's coming in and out, going shopping and returning, and they didn't bother him. But he was not going shopping today. Where was he going? He didn't know. He had come onto the street without knowing where he would go.

He wasn't going back to the loft—that was for sure. But where could he go? The pigeons flew from roof to roof. Traffic rumbled by, and the ever-present bums loitered about, getting drunker on cheap, poisonous alcohol. Although Prabhupāda's home had suddenly become an insane terror, the street at its door was also a hellish, dangerous place. He was shaken. He could call Dr. Mishra's, and they might take him in. But that chapter of his life was over, and he had gone on to something better. He had his own classes, young people chanting and hearing. Was it all over now? After nine months in America, he had finally gotten a good response to his preaching and kīrtana. He couldn't just quit now.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja, whom everyone knew and respected in Vṛndāvana as a distinguished scholar and devotee, who had an open invitation to see the vice president of India and many other notables, now had to face starkly that he had not one friend of stature in the United States. Suddenly he was as homeless as any derelict on the street. In fact many of them, with their long-time berths in flophouses, were more secure than he. They were ruined, but settled. The Bowery could be a chaotic hell if you weren't on a very purposeful errand—going directly to the store, or back to your place. It was no place to stand wondering where will you live or is there a friend you can turn to. He wasn't on his way to Chinatown to shop, nor was he taking a little stroll, soon to return to the shelter of the loft. If he couldn't go to the loft, he had no place.

How difficult it was becoming to preach in America amid these crazy people! He had written prophetically in his poem the day he had arrived in Boston Harbor, "My dear Lord, I do not know

why You have brought me here. Now You can do with me whatever You like. But I guess You have some business here, otherwise why would You bring me to this terrible place?" What about his scheduled classes? What about David—should he go back and try to talk with the boy? This had been David's first fit of violence, but there had been other tense moments. David had a habit of leaving the soap on the floor of the shower stall, and Prabhupāda had asked him not to, because it was a hazard. But David wouldn't listen. Prabhupāda had continued to remind him, and one day David had gotten angry and shouted at him. But there was no real enmity. Even today's incident had not been a matter of personal differences—the boy was a victim.

Prabhupāda walked quickly. He had free passage on the Scindia Line. He could go home to Vṛndāvana. But his spiritual master had ordered him to come here. "By the strong desire of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura," he had written while crossing the Atlantic, "the holy name of Lord Gaurāṅga will spread throughout all the countries of the Western world." Before nightfall he would have to find some place to stay, a way to keep up the momentum of his preaching. This is what it meant to be working without government sponsorship, without the support of any religious organization, without a patron. It meant being vulnerable and insecure. Prabhupāda faced the crisis as a test from Kṛṣṇa. The instruction of Bhagavad-gītā was to depend on Kṛṣṇa for protection: "In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service be fully conscious of Me... You will pass over all the obstacles of conditional life by My grace."

He decided to phone Carl Yeargens and ask him to help. Hearing the Swami's voice on the phone—it was an emergency!—Carl at once agreed that Prabhupāda could move in with him and his wife, Eva. Their place was close by, on Centre Street, five blocks west of Bowery near Chinatown. Carl would be right over.

After Carl found Prabhupāda, they went straight to Carl's place, an A.I.R. loft, smaller than the one Prabhupāda had been living in. It had a main living area, large and open, with areas for the kitchen and bedroom partitioned off. There were decorative indoor plants and a profusion of throw pillows placed all around. Carl's loft was much brighter than the dingy, factorylike space in the loft on the Bowery. The floor was painted bright orange—Carl used to say it looked like the deck of a ship. The walls and ceiling were white, and light from seven skylights filled the room. Carl and Eva settled the Swami in one corner.

Prabhupāda had left his belongings at David's loft and didn't want to go back, so Carl went over to pick up a few essential items. Prabhupāda asked him to leave most of his things, including his books, suitcases, and reel-to-reel tape recorder, where they were.

Although by this time David had come down from the intense effects of the LSD, he remained crazy. When Carl arrived at the loft, the door was locked and David was inside, afraid to let anyone in, although finally he relented. He had shut and locked all the windows, making the loft oppressively hot and stuffy. Bill Epstein, who also came by that day, analyzed David as having had "a drug-induced nervous breakdown, a narco psychosis." And although David was sorry he had exploded at the Swami, neither Bill nor Carl thought Prabhupāda should live with David again. Apparently Prabhupāda's chances of making the loft into a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple were finished. Carl

and Bill gathered up a few of the Swami's belongings, and David stayed behind in the loft. He wanted to be alone.

Carl Yeargens knew Prabhupāda's living habits and wanted to accommodate him with a suitable place to live and work. In a small alcove at one end of his loft, Carl had a small study, which he allocated for the Swami. Carl also set up a cushioned dais and arranged the living room around it so that guests could sit on the floor in a semicircle. Carl's wife, who didn't really like the idea of a swami moving in, agreed to cover a few cushions with Indian madras material for him anyway.

Things went smoothly for a while. Prabhupāda continued his morning and evening classes, and many of the Bowery hip crowd came by. Three of his regular callers lived right in the same building, and a few others, including Carl's brother, were just around the block. Michael Grant, James Greene—even David Allen came once.

Don Nathanson (an artist): I was at Carl's loft, and the Swami comes strolling in one day. So I already knew he was on the scene, from David's. Mostly musicians were coming. They were enjoying the private morning session with him. And that's really strange in itself, because these people were up almost all night, and he used to do it at six in the morning, for one hour. He would lead them in chanting with his hand cymbals—dot-dot-dah, dot-dot-dah. It was strange, because that crowd was heavy into drugs and they were well read. But for a short period they used to go every morning, nine or ten of them, and they felt very good about it. They felt very good that they did that in the morning.

Carl felt that the creative group who came to see the Swami in his studio were all quick to enter into the mood of the kīrtana, but they were “using it in their own ways, to supplement their own private visions and ecstasies,” with no real intention of adopting the disciplines or the undivided worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda was their first real contact with a spiritual person, and yet even without trying to understand, they became absorbed in his kīrtanas and in what he had to say. Carl would invite them: “Hey, come on. This is genuine. This is real. You'll like it. It's music. It's dance. It's celebration.” Carl saw that “people just felt good being in the Swami's presence and meditating on the chanting and eating the Swami's cooking. It was unlike anything they had experienced before, except maybe for their moments of creative insight.”

Yet for Carl and Eva, Prabhupāda's simple presence created difficulty. Never before during his whole stay in America had he been a more inconvenient or unwanted guest. Carl's studio was arranged for him and his wife to live in alone, using the bedroom, kitchen, and living room any way they liked. If they wanted to smoke marijuana or eat meat or whatever, that was their prerogative. This was Carl's home; he lived here with his wife Eva and their dogs and cats. But now they had to share it with the Swami.

Almost at once, the situation became intolerable for Eva. She resented the Swami's presence in her home. She was a feminist, a liberated white woman with a black husband and a good job. She didn't like the Swami's views on women. She hadn't read his books or attended his classes, but she had heard that he was opposed to sexual intercourse except for conceiving children, and that in his view a woman was supposed to be shy and chaste and help her husband in spiritual life. She knew about the Swami's four rules—no meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, or gambling—and she

definitely did not want Carl's Swami trying to change their ways to suit his. And he had better not expect her to wait on him as his servant. She sensed the Swami objecting to almost everything she did. If she were to seek his advice, he would probably ask her to stop taking drugs, get rid of the cats and dogs, stop drinking, and stop contraceptive sex. If the Swami had his way, they would probably eat only at certain times and only certain foods. Eva was a heavy smoker, so he probably wouldn't like being around her. She was ready for a confrontation.

But Prabhupāda was not one to make intolerant demands while living in another's home. He kept to his allotted corner of the loft, and he made no demands or criticisms. Hadn't he seen his hosts in Butler eating meat and only remarked, "Think nothing of it"? Nevertheless, his imposing spiritual presence made Eva sorry Carl had ever met him. To Eva the Swami was an inimical force—and she, being candid and independent, let him know. As soon as he asked whether she could bring him something, she replied, "Get it yourself."

Carol Bekar saw the situation as being extremely uncomfortable and tense—"Eva was quite resentful." Eva complained to Carol: here she was paying rent for the loft, working hard, and this man was trying to change their way of life.

Carol: Eva couldn't handle his teachings, and she couldn't handle his influence over Carl. She didn't feel so constrained, but she felt that Swamiji was making Carl feel constrained.

This was Eva's main objection—the Swami was influencing Carl. Her relationship with Carl had only recently begun, and Carl was aware that she needed much of his time. He agreed with his wife, yet he couldn't refuse the Swami. He was interested in Indian music, poetry, and religions, and here was a living authority, vastly knowledgeable in all facets of Indian culture, right in his home. Prabhupāda would cook his meals in their kitchen, and right away Carl would be there, eager to learn the art of Indian cuisine. Carl also wanted the Swami to show him how to play the drum. They would have long talks together.

Carol: Carl was trying to be something he really wasn't, but he would never have suggested that the Swami had to leave. Swami, I am sure, was astute enough to pick up on this tension. As soon as he could, he tried to move to another place.

Gradually, Carl reached an impasse in his relationship with Prabhupāda. He couldn't share his life with both his wife and the Swami, and ultimately he was more inclined toward his wife.

Carl: I couldn't see my loft becoming a temple. I was raising cats and dogs, and he wanted them removed. He used to call me a meat-eater. But then he changed our diet. Of course, he was hitting the American culture, which doesn't know what all this business is. I have to put it on myself as much as anyone. I could understand and absorb India through an impersonal agency like a book or a record, but here was the living representative of Godhead, and to me it was as difficult as anything I've ever had to do before or since.

Prabhupāda was not insensitive to the distress his presence was causing. He didn't want to inconvenience anyone, and of course he could have avoided all inconvenience, both for himself and

for people like Eva, if he had never come to America. But he wasn't concerned with convenience or inconvenience, pleasing Eva or displeasing her. He wanted to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda had a mission, and Carl's loft didn't seem to be the right base for it. Prabhupāda's friends all agreed: he should move more into the center of things. The Bowery and Chinatown were too far out of the way. They would find him a new place.

Forced by conditions he accepted as Kṛṣṇa's mercy, Prabhupāda sat patiently, trying not to disturb anyone, yet speaking about Kṛṣṇa consciousness day and night. Carl assured him that with half a dozen people searching, it wouldn't take long to find a new place, and they would all chip in together and help him with the rent.

* * *

A week passed, and no one had found a suitable place for the Swami. One day Prabhupāda suggested that he and Carl take a walk up to Michael Grant's place and ask him to help.

Mike: I was awakened one morning very early, and Carl was on the phone saying, "Swamiji and I were just taking a walk, and we thought we'd come up and see you." I said, "But it's too early in the morning." And he said, "Well, Swamiji wants to see you." They were very near by, just down the street, so I had to quickly get dressed, and by the time I got to the door they were there.

I was totally unprepared, but invited them up. The television had been on from the previous night, and there were some cartoons on. The Swami sat between Carl and me on the couch. I was keeping a pet cat, and the cat jumped up on Swamiji's lap, and he abruptly knocked it off onto the floor. We began to talk, but Swamiji glanced over at the cartoons on the television set and said, "This is nonsense." Suddenly I realized that the television was on and that it was nonsense, and I got up very quickly, saying, "Why, yes, it is nonsense," and turned it off.

As Prabhupāda talked, he tried to impress on Mike how difficult it was for him to live with Carl and Eva, and Mike listened. But was the Swami so sure he couldn't go back to the Bowery loft and live with David Allen? Except for that one incident, it had been a nice setup, hadn't it? Prabhupāda explained that David had become a madman from too much LSD. He was dangerous. Mike gave the Swami a half-incredulous look—David Allen, dangerous? Prabhupāda then told a story: "There's an old saying in India that you get yourself a spiritual master, you sit opposite him, you learn everything from him that you can, then you kill him, you move his body to one side, and then you sit in his place, and you become the guru." As Prabhupāda spoke, Mike began to feel that David was dangerous, so he didn't ask for any more details.

Mike could see that Swamiji was appealing to him for help, and as they all sat together on the couch, Mike and Carl quietly nodded in agreement. The Swami was looking at Mike, and Mike was trying to think.

"So how can we help Swamiji?" Carl interjected.

Mike explained that he was a pianist and he had to practice every day. He had two pianos, two sets of drums, a vibraphone, and other instruments right there in his apartment. Musicians were always coming over to practice, and they all played their instruments for hours. Also, he was living with a girl, and there was a cat in the apartment. But Mike promised that he would help find the Swami a new place. Prabhupāda thanked him and, along with Carl, stood to leave.

Mike felt obligated. He was good at getting things done, and he wanted to do this for the Swami. So the next day he went to *The Village Voice*, got the first newspaper off the press, looked through the classified ads until he found a suitable prospect, and phoned the landlord. It was a storefront on Second Avenue, and an agent, a Mr. Gardiner, agreed to meet Mike there. Carl and the Swami also agreed to come.

Mr. Gardiner and Mike were the first to arrive. Mike noted the unusual hand-painted sign—Matchless Gifts—above the front window. It was a holdover, Mr. Gardiner explained, from when the place had been a nostalgic-gift shop. Mike proceeded to describe the Swami as a spiritual leader from India, an important author, and a Sanskrit scholar. The rental agent seemed receptive. As soon as Prabhupāda and Carl arrived and everyone had been congenially introduced, Mr. Gardiner showed them the small storefront. Prabhupāda, Carl, and Mike carefully considered its possibilities. It was empty, plain and dark—the electricity had not been turned on—and it needed repainting. It would be good for meetings, but not for the Swami's residence. But at \$125 a month it seemed promising. Then Mr. Gardiner revealed a small, second-floor apartment just across the rear courtyard, directly behind the storefront. Another \$71 a month and the Swami could live there, although first Mr. Gardiner would have to repaint it. The total rent would come to \$196, and Carl, Mike, and the others would pitch in.

Prabhupāda had the idea of making Mr. Gardiner the first official trustee of his fledgling Kṛṣṇa consciousness society. During their conversation he presented Mr. Gardiner with a three-volume set of his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and inside the front cover he wrote a personal dedication and then signed it, "A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." Mr. Gardiner felt flattered and honored to receive these books from their author himself. He agreed to become a trustee of the new society for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and so pay the Society twenty dollars a month.

Mr. Gardiner took a week to paint the apartment. Meanwhile, Mike arranged for the electricity and water to be turned on and had a phone installed, and he and Carl raised the first month's rent among their friends. When everything was ready, Mike gave Prabhupāda a call at Carl's.

Now it was time to move the Swami into his new place. A few friends who were on hand accompanied the Swami over to the Bowery loft. Maybe they weren't prepared to become his surrendered disciples, but contributing toward the first month's rent and volunteering a few hours of work to help set up his place were exactly the kinds of things they could do very willingly.

At the loft, they all gathered up portions of the Swami's belongings, and then they started out on foot up Bowery. It was like a safari, a caravan of half a dozen men loaded with Prabhupāda's things. Michael carried the heavy Roberts reel-to-reel, and even the Swami carried two suitcases. They did everything so quickly that it wasn't until they were well on their way and Mike's arm began to ache that he realized, "Why didn't we bring a car?"

It was the end of June, and a hazy summer sun poured its heat down into the Bowery jungle. Starting and stopping, the strange safari, stretching for over a block, slowly trekked along. Prabhupāda struggled with his suitcases, past the seemingly unending row of restaurant supply shops and lamp stores between Grand, Broome, and Spring streets. Sometimes he paused and rested, setting his suitcases down. He was finally moving from the Bowery. His electrician friend on Seventy-second Street would have been relieved, although perhaps he would have disapproved of the Second Avenue address also. At least he was finished residing on Skid Row. He walked on, past the homeless men outside the Salvation Army shelter, past the open-door taverns, stopping at streetlights, standing alongside total strangers, keeping an eye on the progress of his procession of friends who struggled along behind him.

The Bowery artists and musicians saw him as “highly evolved.” They felt that the spirit was moving him and were eager to help him set up his own place so that he could do his valuable spiritual thing and spread it to others. He was depending on them for help, yet they knew he was “on a higher level”; he was his own protector, or, as he said, God protected him.

The Swami and his young friends reached the corner of Bowery and Houston, turned right, and proceeded east. Gazing steadily ahead as he walked, Prabhupāda saw the southern end of Second Avenue, one block away. At Second Avenue he would turn left, walk just one block north across First Street, and arrive at his new home. As he passed the IND subway entrance, the storefront came into view—“Matchless Gifts.” He gripped his suitcases and moved ahead. At Second Avenue and Houston he hurried through a break in the rapid traffic. He could see green trees holding their heads above the high courtyard wall, reaching up like over-grown weeds in the space between the front and rear buildings of his new address.

The streetside building housed his meeting hall, the rear building the apartment where he would live and translate. Adjoining the storefront building on its north side was a massive nine-story warehouse. The storefront structure was only six stories and seemed appended to the larger building like its diminutive child. On its southern side, Prabhupāda's new temple showed a surface of plain cement and was free of any adjoining structure; there was only the spacious lot of the busy Mobil service station that bordered on First Street. As Prabhupāda approached the storefront, he could see two small lanterns decorating the narrow doorway.

There was no certainty of what awaited him here. But already there had been good signs that these American young people, mad though they sometimes were, could actually take part in Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana movement. Perhaps this new address would be the place where he could actually get a footing with his International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

SPL 18: Breaking Ground

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Breaking Ground

Swami Bhaktivedanta came to USA and went swiftly to the Archetype Spiritual Neighborhood, the New York Lower East Side, and installed intact an ancient perfectly preserved piece of street India. He adorned a storefront as his Ashram and adored Krishna therein and by patience and good humor singing chanting and expounding Sanskrit terminology day by day established Krishna Consciousness in the psychedelic (mind-manifesting) center of America East... To choose to attend to the Lower East Side, what kindness and humility and intelligence!

—Allen Ginsberg

from his introduction to

the Macmillan Bhagavad Gītā As It Is

Prabhupāda's new neighborhood was not as run-down as the nearby Bowery, though it certainly was less than quaint. Right across from his storefront, a row of tombstones looked out from the somber, dimly lit display windows of Weitzner Brothers and Papper Memorials. North of Weitzner Brothers was Sam's Luncheonette. Next to Sam's stood an ancient four-story building marked A.I.R., then Ben J. Horowitz Monuments (more gravestones), and finally Schwartz's Funeral Home. On the next block at number 43 a worn canvas awning jutted out onto the sidewalk: Provenzano Lanza Funeral Home. Then there was Cosmos Parcels (importers) and a few blocks further uptown the prominent black-and-white signboard of the Village East Theater.

Up a block, but on the same side of the avenue as the storefront, was the Church of the Nativity, an old three-story building with new blue paint and a gold-colored cross on top. The six-story 26 Second Avenue, its face covered by a greenish fire escape, crouched against the massive nine-story Knickerbocker Fireproof Warehouse.

Second Avenue was a main traffic artery for east Manhattan, and the stoplight at the intersection of Houston and Second pumped a stream of delivery trucks, taxis, and private autos past Prabhupāda's door. From early morning until night there would be cars zooming by, followed by the sound of brakes, the competitive tension of waiting bumper to bumper, the impetuous honking, then gears grinding, engines rumbling and revving, and again the zooming by. The traffic was distractingly heavy.

At 26 Second Avenue there were actually two storefronts. The one to the north was a coin laundry, and the one to the south had been a gift shop but was now vacant. Both had narrow entrances, large display windows, and dull paint. Beneath the Matchless Gifts sign was a window, six feet square, that a few weeks before had displayed matchboxes decorated with photos of movie stars of the thirties and forties. The sign—Matchless Gifts—was the only remaining memento of the nostalgic-gift shop that had recently moved out. Below the shop's window, a pair of iron doors in the sidewalk hid stone steps to the cellar and boiler room. The wide sidewalk had been laid down in sections of various shapes and sizes at different times, years past. Certain sections had cracked or caved in, and a fine dust with tiny sparkling shards of glass had collected in the cracks and depressions. A dull black fire hydrant stood on the curb. Midway between the entrances to the two storefronts was the main entrance to number 26. (This door opened into a foyer lined with

mailboxes and intercoms, and then a locked inner door opened into a hallway leading to the stairs or back to the courtyard.)

To the left of the gift shop's window was its front door, a dark wooden frame holding a full-length pane of glass. The door opened into the long, narrow storefront, which was now completely bare. Just inside, to the right of the door, a platform extending beneath the display window was just the proper height for a seat. At the far end of the bare, dingy room, two grimy-paned windows covered with bars opened into the courtyard. To the left of the left-hand window was a small sink, fixed to the outside of a very small toilet closet, whose door faced the front of the store. A door on the store's left wall connected to a hallway that led into the courtyard.

The courtyard was paved with concrete geometric sections and encircled with shrub gardens and tall trees. There was a picnic table, a cement birdbath, and a birdhouse on a pole, and near the center of the courtyard were two shrub gardens. The courtyard was bordered north and south by high walls, and front and back by the two tenements. The patch of sky above gave relief.

Overlooking the courtyard from the rear building of 26 Second Avenue was Prabhupāda's second-floor apartment, where he would now live, work, and worship. With help from his Bowery friends, he had cleaned and settled into his new home. In the back room—his office—he had placed against one wall a thin cushion with an elephant-print cover and in front of the cushion his unpainted metal suitcase, which served as a desk. He had set his typewriter on the desk and his papers and books on either side. This became his work area. His manuscripts bundled in saffron cloth, his stock of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams, and his few personal effects he kept in the closet opposite his desk. On the wall above his sitting place he hung an Indian calendar print of Lord Kṛṣṇa. (Kṛṣṇa, as a youth, was playing on His flute with a cow close behind Him. Lord Kṛṣṇa was standing on the planet earth, which curved like the top of a small hill beneath His feet.) There were two windows on the east wall, and the dappled morning sunlight, filtering in through the fire escape, fell across the floor.

The next room was bare except for a fancy coffee table, which became Prabhupāda's altar. Here he placed a framed picture of Lord Caitanya and His associates. On the wall he hung an Indian calendar print of four-armed Lord Viṣṇu and Ananta Śeṣa, the celestial snake. And, as in the Bowery loft, he put up a clothesline.

Both rooms were freshly painted, and the floors were clean hardwood parquet. The bathroom was clean and serviceable, as was the narrow, furnished kitchen. Prabhupāda would sometimes stand by the kitchen window, gazing beyond the courtyard wall. He had moved here without any prospects of paying the next month's rent.

Although Carl, Mike, Carol, James, Bill, and others had encouraged him to move here, some of them now found it a little inconvenient to visit him regularly, but they all wished him well and hoped new people would come here to help him. They felt that this location was the best yet. And he seemed more comfortable here. At the Paradox, Bill would spread the word of Swamiji's new address.

The Lower East Side has a history of change and human suffering as old as New York. Three hundred years before Prabhupāda's arrival, it had been part of Peter Stuyvesant's estate. Today's landmark of Tompkins Square Park had then been a salt marsh known as Stuyvesant's Swamp.

The Lower East Side first became a slum in the 1840s, when thousands of Irish immigrants, driven by the Irish potato famine, came and settled. Two decades later, the Irish became the image of the American to the next immigrants, the Germans, who gradually grew in numbers to become the largest immigrant group in New York City. Next came East European Jews (Poles and Ukrainians), and by 1900 the Lower East Side had become the most densely populated Jewish ghetto in the world. But in the next generation the ghetto began to break up as Jews moved to the suburbs and economic advancement.

Next the Puerto Ricans thronged in—hundreds of thousands in the 1950s—immigrating from their island poverty or moving in from East Harlem. They, and the Negroes from Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant who arrived next, were the new groups who along with the Poles and Ukrainians populated the two square miles of tenements and crowded streets that formed the Lower East Side slums in the 1960s.

Then, only a few years before Prabhupāda's arrival, a different kind of slum-dweller had appeared on the Lower East Side. Although there have been many sociological and cultural analyses of this phenomenon, it remains ultimately inexplicable why they suddenly came, like a vast flock of birds swooping down or like animals in a great instinctual migration, and why after a few years they vanished.

At first the newcomers were mostly young artists, musicians, and intellectuals, similar to the hip crowd of Prabhupāda's Bowery days. Then came the young middle-class dropouts. Because living space was more available and rents were lower than in nearby Greenwich Village, they concentrated here on the Lower East Side, which in the parlance of the renting agents became known as the East Village. Many even came without finding a place to live and camped in the hallways of tenements. Drawn by cheap rent and the promise of Bohemian freedom, these young middle-class dropouts, the avant-garde of a nationwide youth movement soon to be known in the media as “hippies,” wandered to the Lower East Side slums in living protest against America's good life of materialism.

As if responding to an instinctual call, younger teenage runaways joined the older hippies, and following the runaways came the police, counselors, social and welfare workers, youth hostels, and drug counseling centers. On St. Mark's Place a new hip commercialism sprang up, with head shops, poster shops, record shops, art galleries, and bookstores that carried everything from cigarette papers to hip clothes and psychedelic lighting.

The hippies journeyed to the Lower East Side in full conviction that this was the place to be, just as their immigrant predecessors had done. For the European immigrants of another age, New York Harbor had been the gateway to a land of riches and opportunity, as they at long last set their eyes on Manhattan's skyline and the Statue of Liberty. Now, in 1966, American youth thronged to New

York City with hopes of their own and feasted on the vision of their newfound mystical land—the Lower East Side slums.

It was an uneasy coexistence, with hippies on one side and Puerto Ricans, Poles, and Ukrainians on the other. The established ethnic groups resented the newcomers, who didn't really have to live in the slums, whereas they themselves did. In fact, many of the young newcomers were from immigrant families that had struggled for generations to establish themselves as middle-class Americans. Nevertheless, the youth migration to the Lower East Side was just as real as the immigration of Puerto Ricans or Poles or Ukrainians had been, although the motives of course were quite different.

The hippies had turned from the suburban materialism of their parents, the inane happiness of TV and advertising—the ephemeral goals of middle-class America. They were disillusioned by parents, teachers, clergy, public leaders, and the media, dissatisfied with American policy in Vietnam, and allured by radical political ideologies that exposed America as a cruel, selfish, exploitative giant who must now reform or die. And they were searching for real love, real peace, real existence, and real spiritual consciousness.

By the summer of Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival at 26 Second Avenue, the first front in the great youth rebellion of the sixties had already entered the Lower East Side. Here they were free—free to live in simple poverty and express themselves through art, music, drugs, and sex. The talk was of spiritual searching. LSD and marijuana were the keys, opening new realms of awareness. Notions about Eastern cultures and Eastern religions were in vogue. Through drugs, yoga, brotherhood, or just by being free—somehow they would attain enlightenment. Everyone was supposed to keep an open mind and develop his own cosmic philosophy by direct experience and drug-expanded consciousness, blended with his own eclectic readings. And if their lives appeared aimless, at least they had dropped out of a pointless game where the player sells his soul for material goods and in this way supports a system that is already rotten.

So it was that in 1966, thousands of young people were walking the streets of the Lower East Side, not simply intoxicated or crazy (though they often were), but in search of life's ultimate answers, in complete disregard of “the establishment” and the day-to-day life pursued by millions of “straight” Americans.

That the prosperous land of America could breed so many discontented youths surprised Prabhupāda. Of course, it also further proved that material well-being, the hallmark of American life, couldn't make people happy. Prabhupāda did not see the unhappiness around him in terms of the immediate social, political, economic, and cultural causes. Neither slum conditions nor youth rebellions were the all-important realities. These were mere symptoms of a universal unhappiness to which the only cure was Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He sympathized with the miseries of everyone, but he saw the universal solution.

Prabhupāda had not made a study of the youth movement in America before moving to the Lower East Side. He had never even made specific plans to come here amid so many young people. But in the ten months since Calcutta, he had been moved by force of circumstances, or, as he understood it, “by Kṛṣṇa's will,” from one place to another. On the order of his spiritual master he had come to

America, and by Kṛṣṇa's will he had come to the Lower East Side. His mission here was the same as it had been on the Bowery or uptown or even in India. He was fixed in the order of his spiritual master and the Vedic view, a view that wasn't going to be influenced by the radical changes of the 1960s. Now if it so happened that these young people, because of some change in the American cultural climate, were to prove more receptive to him, then that would be welcome. And that would also be by Kṛṣṇa's will.

Actually, because of the ominous influence of the Kali millennium, this was historically the worst of times for spiritual cultivation—hippie revolution or not. And Śrīla Prabhupāda was trying to transplant Vedic culture into a more alien ground than had any previous spiritual master. So he expected to find his work extremely difficult. Yet in this generally bad age, just prior to Prabhupāda's arrival on the Lower East Side, tremors of dissatisfaction and revolt against the Kali-yuga culture itself began vibrating through American society, sending waves of young people to wander the streets of New York's Lower East Side in search of something beyond the ordinary life, looking for alternatives, seeking spiritual fulfillment. These young people, broken from their stereotyped materialistic backgrounds and drawn together now on New York's Lower East Side, were the ones who were by chance or choice or destiny to become the congregation for the Swami's storefront offerings of kīrtana and spiritual guidance.

The Swami's arrival went unnoticed. The neighbors said someone new had taken the gift shop next to the laundry. There was a strange picture in the window now, but no one knew what to make of it. Some passersby noticed a piece of paper, announcing classes in Bhagavad-gītā, taped to the window. A few stopped to read it, but no one knew what to make of it. They didn't know what Bhagavad-gītā was, and the few who did thought, "Maybe a yoga bookstore or something." The Puerto Ricans in the neighborhood would look in the window at Harvey Cohen's painting and then blankly walk away. The manager of the Mobil gas station next door couldn't care less who had moved in—it just didn't make any difference. The tombstone-sellers and undertakers across the street didn't care. And for the drivers of the countless cars and trucks that passed by, Swamiji's place didn't even exist. But there were young people around who had been intrigued with the painting, who went up to the window to read the little piece of paper. Some of them even knew about the Bhagavad-gītā, although the painting of Lord Caitanya and the dancers didn't seem to fit. A few thought maybe they would attend Swami Bhaktivedanta's classes and check out the scene.

* * *

July 1966

Howard Wheeler was hurrying from his apartment on Mott Street to a friend's apartment on Fifth Street, a quiet place where he hoped to find some peace. He walked up Mott Street to Houston, turned right and began to walk east, across Bowery, past the rushing traffic and stumbling derelicts, and toward Second Avenue.

Howard: After crossing Bowery, just before Second Avenue, I saw Swamiji jauntily strolling down the sidewalk, his head held high in the air, his hand in the bead bag. He struck me like a famous actor in a very familiar movie. He seemed ageless. He was wearing the traditional saffron-colored

robes of a sannyāsi and quaint white shoes with points. Coming down Houston, he looked like the genie that popped out of Aladdin's lamp.

Howard, age twenty-six, was a tall, large-bodied man with long, dark hair, a profuse beard, and black-framed eyeglasses. He was an instructor in English at Ohio State University and was fresh from a trip to India, where he had been looking for a true guru.

Prabhupāda noticed Howard, and they both stopped simultaneously. Howard asked the first question that popped into his mind: "Are you from India?"

Prabhupāda smiled. "Oh, yes, and you?"

Howard: I told him no, but that I had just returned from India and was very interested in his country and the Hindu philosophy. He told me he had come from Calcutta and had been in New York almost ten months. His eyes were as fresh and cordial as a child's, and even standing before the trucks that roared and rumbled their way down Houston Street, he emanated a cool tranquillity that was unshakably established in something far beyond the great metropolis that roared around us.

Howard never made it to his friend's place that day. He went back to his own apartment on Mott Street, to Keith and Wally, his roommates, to tell them and everyone he knew about the guru who had inexplicably appeared within their midst.

Keith and Howard had been to India. Now they were involved in various spiritual philosophies, and their friends used to come over and talk about enlightenment. Eighteen-year-old Chuck Barnett was a regular visitor.

Chuck: You would open the door of the apartment, and thousands of cockroaches would disappear into the woodwork. And the smell was enough to knock you over. So Keith was trying to clean the place up and kick some people out. They were sharing the rent—Wally, Keith, Howard, and several others. Due to a lack of any other process, they were using LSD to try and increase their spiritual life. Actually we were all trying to use drugs to help in meditation. Anyway, Wally, Howard, and Keith were trying to find the perfect spiritual master, as we all were.

Howard remembers his own spiritual seeking as "reading books on Eastern philosophy and religion, burning lots of candles and incense, and taking gañjā and peyote and LSD as aids to meditation. Actually, it was more intoxication than meditation. "Meditation" was a euphemism that somehow connected our highs with our readings."

Keith, twenty-nine, the son of a Southern Baptist minister, was a Ph.D. candidate in history at Columbia University. He was preparing his thesis on "The Rise of Revivalism in the Southern United States." Dressed in old denim cutoffs, sandals, and T-shirt, he was something of a guru among the Mott Street coterie.

Wally was in his thirties, shabbily dressed, bearded, intellectual, and well read in Buddhist literature. He had been a radio engineer in the army and, like his roommates, was unemployed. He

was reading Alan Watts, Hermann Hesse, and others, talking about spiritual enlightenment, and taking LSD.

In India, Howard and Keith had visited Hardwar, Rishikesh, Benares, and other holy cities, experiencing Indian temples, hashish, and dysentery. One evening in Calcutta they had come upon a group of sādhus chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and playing hand cymbals. For Howard and Keith, as for many Westerners, the essence of Indian philosophy was Śaṅkara's doctrine of impersonal oneness: everything is false except the one impersonal spirit. They had bought books that told them, "Whatever way you express your faith, that way is a valid spiritual path."

Now the three roommates—Howard, Keith, and Wally—began to mix various philosophies into a hodgepodge of their own. Howard would mix in a little Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, or Blake; Keith would cite Biblical references; and Wally would add a bit of Buddhist wisdom. And they all kept up on Timothy Leary, Thomas à Kempis, and many others, the whole mixture being subject to a total reevaluation whenever one of the group experienced a new cosmic insight through LSD.

This was the group that Howard returned to that day in July. Excitedly, he told them about the Swami—how he looked and what he had said. Howard told how after they had stood and talked together the Swami had mentioned his place nearby on Second Avenue, where he was planning to hold some classes.

Howard: I walked around the corner with him. He pointed out a small storefront building between First and Second streets next door to a Mobil filling station. It had been a curiosity shop, and someone had painted the words Matchless Gifts over the window. At that time, I didn't realize how prophetic those words were. "This is a good area?" he asked me. I told him that I thought it was. I had no idea what he was going to offer at his "classes," but I knew that all my friends would be glad that an Indian swami was moving into the neighborhood.

The word spread. Although it wasn't so easy now for Carl Yeagens and certain others to come up from the Bowery and Chinatown—they had other things to do—Roy Dubois, a twenty-five-year-old writer for comic books, had visited Prabhupāda on the Bowery, and when he heard about the Swami's new place, he wanted to drop by. James Greene and Bill Epstein had not forgotten the Swami, and they wanted to come. The Paradox restaurant was still a live connection and brought new interested people. And others, like Stephen Guarino, saw the Swami's sign in the window. Steve, age twenty-six, was a caseworker for the city's welfare department, and one day on his lunch break, as he was walking home from the welfare office at Fifth Street and Second Avenue, he saw the Swami's sign taped to the window. He had been reading a paperback Gītā, and he promised himself he would attend the Swami's class.

That day as he stood with the Swami before the storefront, Howard had also noticed the little sign in the window:

LECTURES IN BHAGAVAD GITA

A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI

MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY

7:00 to 9:00 P.M.

"Will you bring your friends?" Prabhupāda had asked.

"Yes," Howard promised. "Monday evening."

* * *

The summer evening was warm, and in the storefront the back windows and front door were opened wide. Young men, several of them dressed in black denims and button-down sport shirts with broad dull stripes, had left their worn sneakers by the front door and were now sitting on the floor. Most of them were from the Lower East Side; no one had had to go to great trouble to come here. The little room was barren. No pictures, no furniture, no rug, not even a chair. Only a few plain straw mats. A single bulb hung from the ceiling into the center of the room. It was seven o'clock, and about a dozen people had gathered, when the Swami suddenly opened the side door and entered the room.

He wasn't wearing a shirt, and the saffron cloth that draped his torso left his arms and some of his chest bare. His complexion was smooth golden brown, and as they watched him, his head shaven, his ears longlobed, and his aspect grave, he seemed like pictures they'd seen of the Buddha in meditation. He was old, yet erect in his posture, fresh and radiant. His forehead was decorated with the yellowish clay markings of the Vaiṣṇavas. Prabhupāda recognized big, bearded Howard and smiled. "You have brought your friends?"

"Yes," Howard answered in his loud, resonant voice.

"Ah, very good."

Prabhupāda stepped out of his white shoes, sat down on a thin mat, faced his congregation, and indicated they could all be seated. He distributed several pairs of brass hand cymbals and briefly demonstrated the rhythm: one... two... three. He began playing—a startling, ringing sound. He began singing: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Now it was the audience's turn. "Chant," he told them. Some already knew, gradually the others caught on, and after a few rounds, all were chanting together.

Most of these young men and the few young women present had at one time or another embarked on the psychedelic voyage in search of a new world of expanded consciousness. Boldly and recklessly, they had entered the turbulent, forbidden waters of LSD, peyote, and magic mushrooms. Heedless of warnings, they had risked everything and done it. Yet there was merit in their valor, their eagerness to find the extra dimensions of the self, to get beyond ordinary existence—even if they didn't know what the beyond was or whether they would ever return to the comfort of the ordinary. Nonetheless, whatever truth they had found, they remained unfulfilled, and whatever worlds they had reached, these young psychedelic voyagers had always returned to the Lower East Side. Now they were sampling the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

When the kīrtana suddenly sprang up from the Swami's cymbals and sonorous voice, they immediately felt that it was going to be something far out. Here was another chance to "trip out," and willingly they began to flow with it. They would surrender their minds and explore the limits of the chanting for all it was worth. Most of them had already associated the mantra with the mystical Upaniṣads and Gītā, which had called out to them in words of mystery: "Eternal spirit... Negating illusion." But whatever it is, this Indian mantra, let it come, they thought. Let its waves carry us far and high. Let's take it, and let the effects come. Whatever the price, let it come. The chanting seemed simple and natural enough. It was sweet and wasn't going to harm anyone. It was, in its own way, far out.

As Prabhupāda chanted in his own inner ecstasy, he observed his motley congregation. He was breaking ground in a new land now. As the hand cymbals rang, the lead-and-response of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra swelled, filling the evening. Some neighbors were annoyed. Puerto Rican children, enchanted, appeared at the door and window, looking. Twilight came.

Exotic it was, yet anyone could see that a swami was raising an ancient prayer in praise of God. This wasn't rock or jazz. He was a holy man, a swami, making a public religious demonstration. But the combination was strange: an old Indian swami chanting an ancient mantra with a storefront full of young American hippies singing along.

Prabhupāda sang on, his shaven head held high and tilted, his body trembling slightly with emotion. Confidently, he led the mantra, absorbed in pure devotion, and they responded. More passersby were drawn to the front window and open door. Some jeered, but the chanting was too strong. Within the sound of the kīrtana, even the car horns were a faint staccato. The vibration of auto engines and the rumble of trucks continued, but in the distance now, unnoticed.

Gathered under the dim electric light in the bare room, the group chanted after their leader, growing gradually from a feeble, hesitant chorus to an approximate harmony of voices. They continued clapping and chanting, putting into it whatever they could, in hopes of discovering its secrets. This swami was not simply giving some five-minute sample demonstration. For the moment he was their leader, their guide in an unknown realm. Howard and Keith's little encounter with a kīrtana in Calcutta had left them outsiders. The chanting had never before come like this, right in the middle of the Lower East Side with a genuine swami leading them.

In their minds were psychedelic ambitions to see the face of God, fantasies and visions of Hindu teachings, and the presumption that "IT" was all impersonal light. Prabhupāda had encountered a similar group on the Bowery, and he knew this group wasn't experiencing the mantra in the proper disciplined reverence and knowledge. But he let them chant in their own way. In time their submission to the spiritual sound, their purification, and their enlightenment and ecstasy in chanting and hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa would come.

He stopped the kīrtana. The chanting had swept back the world, but now the Lower East Side rushed in again. The children at the door began to chatter and laugh. Cars and trucks made their rumblings heard once more. And a voice shouted from a nearby apartment, demanding quiet. It was now past 7:30. Half an hour had elapsed.

* * *

Now today, we shall begin the Fourth Chapter—what Lord Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna.

His lecture is very basic and yet (for restless youth) heavily philosophical. Some can't take it, and they rise rudely upon hearing the Swami's first words, put on their shoes at the front door, and return to the street. Others have left as soon as they saw the singing was over. Still, this is his best group yet. A few of the Bowery congregation are present. The boys from Mott Street are here, and they're specifically looking for a guru. Many in the group have already read Bhagavad-gītā—and they're not too proud to hear and admit that they didn't understand it.

It's another hot and noisy July evening outside his door. Children are on summer vacation, and they stay out on the street until dark. Nearby, a big dog is barking—"Row! Row! Row!"—the traffic creates constant rumbling, just outside the window little girls are shrieking, and all this makes lecturing difficult. Yet despite the distraction of children, traffic, and dogs, he wants the door open. If it is closed, he says, "Why is it closed? People may come in." He continues, undaunted, quoting Sanskrit, holding his audience, and developing his urgent message, while the relentless cacophony rivals his every word...

"Row! Row! Row!"

"Eeeeeeeek! Yaaaaaaa!" Shrieking like little Spanish witches, the girls disturb the whole block. In the distance, a man shouts from his window: "Get outta here! Get outta here!"

Prabhupāda: Ask them not to make noise.

Roy (one of the boys in the temple): The man is chasing the kids now.

Prabhupāda: Yes, yes, these children are making a disturbance. Ask them...

Roy: Yes, that's what... the man's chasing them right now.

Prabhupāda: They are making noises.

Roy: Yes, he's chasing them now.

The man chases the children away, but they'll be back. You can't chase the children off the street—they live there. And the big dog never stops barking. And who can stop the cars? The cars are always there. Prabhupāda uses the cars to give an example: When a car momentarily comes into our vision on Second Avenue, we certainly don't think that it had no existence before we saw it or that it ceases to exist once it has passed from view; similarly, when Kṛṣṇa goes from this planet to an other, it doesn't mean He no longer exists, although it may appear that way. Actually, He has only left our sight. Kṛṣṇa and His incarnations constantly appear and disappear on innumerable planets throughout the innumerable universes of the material creation.

The cars are always passing, roaring and rumbling through every word Prabhupāda speaks. The door is open, and he is poised at the edge of a river of carbon monoxide, asphalt, rumbling tires, and constant waves of traffic. He has come a long way from the banks of his Yamunā in Vṛndāvana, where great saints and sages have gathered through the ages to discuss Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But his audience lives here amid this scene, so he has come here, beside Second Avenue's rushing river of traffic, to speak loudly the ageless message.

He is still stressing the same point: whatever you do in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however little it may be, is eternally good for you. Yet now, more than uptown or on the Bowery, he is calling his hearers to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness fully and become devotees. He assures them...

Anyone can become a devotee and friend of Kṛṣṇa like Arjuna. You will be surprised that Lord Caitanya's principal disciples were all so-called fallen in society. He appointed Haridāsa Ṭhākura to the highest position in His spiritual mission, although he happened to take birth in a Muhammadan family. So there is no bar for anyone. Everyone can become spiritual master, provided he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa. This is the science of Kṛṣṇa, this Bhagavad-gītā. And if anyone knows it perfectly, then he becomes a spiritual master.

And this transcendental vibration, Hare Kṛṣṇa, will help us by cleaning the dust from the mirror of our mind. On the mind we have accumulated material dust. Just like on the Second Avenue, due to the constant traffic of motorcars, there's always a creation of dust over everything. Similarly, by our manipulation of materialistic activities, there are some material dusts which are accumulated on the mind, and therefore we are unable to see things in true perspective. So this process, the vibration of the transcendental sound—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—will cleanse the dust. And as soon as the dust is cleared, then, as you see your nice face in the mirror, similarly you can see your real constitutional position as spirit soul. In Sanskrit language it is said, bhava-mahā-dāvāgni. Lord Caitanya said that. Lord Caitanya's picture you have seen in the front window. He is dancing and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. So, it doesn't matter what a person was doing before, what sinful activities. A person may not be perfect at first, but if he is engaged in service, then he will be purified.

Suddenly a Bowery derelict enters, whistling and drunkenly shouting. The audience remains seated, not knowing what to make of it.

Drunk: How are ya? I'll be right back. I brought another thing.

Prabhupāda: Don't disturb. Sit down. We are talking seriously.

Drunk: I'll put it up there. In a church? All right. I'll be right back.

The man is white-haired, with a short grizzly beard and frowsy clothing. His odor reeks through the temple. But then he suddenly careens out the door and is gone. Prabhupāda chuckles softly and returns immediately to his lecture.

So it doesn't matter what a person was doing before, if he engages in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and Bhagavad-gītā—it should be concluded that he is a saint. He is a saintly

person. *Api cet sudurācāro*. Never mind if he may have some external immoral habit due to his past association. It doesn't matter. Some way or other, one should become Kṛṣṇa conscious, and then gradually he will become a saintly person as he goes on executing this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

There is a story about how habit is second nature. There was a thief, and he went on pilgrimage with some friends. So at night when the others were sleeping, because his habit was to steal at night, he got up and was taking someone's baggage. But then he was thinking, "Oh, I have come to this holy place of pilgrimage, but still I am committing theft by habit. No, I shall not do it."

So then he took someone's bag and put it in another's place, and for the whole night the poor fellow moved the bags of the pilgrims from here to there. But due to his conscience, because he was on a holy pilgrimage, he did not actually take anything. So in the morning when everyone got up, they looked around and said, "Where is my bag? I don't see it." And another man says, "I don't see my bag." And then someone says, "Oh, there is your bag." So there was some row, so they thought, "What is the matter? How has it so happened?"

Then the thief rose up and told all of the friends, "My dear gentlemen, I am a thief by occupation, and because I have that habit to steal at night, I couldn't stop myself. But I thought, 'I have come to this holy place, so I won't do it.' Therefore I placed one person's bag in another man's place. Please excuse me."

So this is habit. He doesn't want to, but he has a habit of doing it. He has decided not to commit theft any more, but sometimes he does, habitually. So Kṛṣṇa says that in such conditions, when one who has decided to stop all immoral habits and just take to this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, if by chance he does something which is immoral in the face of society, that should not be taken account of. In the next verse Kṛṣṇa says, *kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā*: because he has dovetailed himself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is sure that he will be saintly very soon.

Suddenly the old derelict returns, announcing his entrance: "How are ya?" He is carrying something. He maneuvers his way through the group, straight to the back of the temple, where the Swami is sitting. He opens the toilet room door, puts two rolls of bathroom tissue inside, closes the door, and then turns to the sink, sits some paper towels on top of it and puts two more rolls of bathroom tissue and some more paper towels under the sink. He then stands and turns around toward the Swami and the audience. The Swami is looking at him and asks, "What is this?" The bum is silent now; he has done his work. Prabhupāda begins to laugh, thanking his visitor, who is now moving toward the door: "Thank you. Thank you very much." The bum exits. "Just see," Prabhupāda now addresses his congregation. "It is a natural tendency to give some service. Just see, he is not in order, but he thought that, 'Here is something. Let me give some service.' Just see how automatically it comes. This is natural."

The young men in the audience look at one another. This is really far out—first the chanting with the brass cymbals, the Swami looking like Buddha and talking about Kṛṣṇa and chanting, and now this crazy stuff with the bum. But the Swami stays cool, he's really cool, just sitting on the floor like he's not afraid of anything, just talking his philosophy about the soul and us becoming saints and even the old drunk becoming a saint!

After almost an hour, the dog still barks and the kids still squeal.

Prabhupāda is asking his hearers, who are only beginners in spiritual life, to become totally dedicated preachers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: "In the Bhagavad-gītā, you will find that anyone who preaches the gospel of Bhagavad-gītā to the people of the world is the most dear, the dearest person to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore it is our duty to preach the principles of this Bhagavad-gītā to make people Kṛṣṇa conscious." Prabhupāda can't wait to tell them—even if they aren't ready. It's too urgent. The world needs Kṛṣṇa conscious preachers.

People are suffering for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, each and every one of us should be engaged in the preaching work of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the benefit of the whole world. Lord Caitanya, whose picture is in the front of our store, has very nicely preached the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Lord says, "Just take my orders, all of you, and become a spiritual master." Lord Caitanya gives the order that in every country you go and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So if we take up this missionary work to preach Bhagavad-gītā as it is, without interpretation and without any material motives behind it—as it is—then Kṛṣṇa says it shall be done. We should not have any attraction for worldly activities; otherwise we can't have Kṛṣṇa. But it doesn't mean that we should be inimical to the people of the world. No, it is our duty to give them the highest instruction, that you become Kṛṣṇa conscious and—

A young man in the audience seems unable to contain himself and begins making his own incoherent speech.

Prabhupāda: No. You cannot disturb just now.

Man (standing up): Now wait a minute, man. (A quarrel begins as others try to quiet him.)

Prabhupāda: No, no, no. No, no, no, no. Not just now. No, no, you cannot ask just now.

Man: Well, I am trying to talk.

Prabhupāda: No, just now you cannot ask.

Man: But wait a minute, man. Wait.

Prabhupāda: Why do you interfere just now? We have a regular question time.

Others in the audience: Let the man finish. Yeah, let him talk. (The man's supporters defend his right to speak, while others try to silence him.)

Second man: I have just one question, please. How long is an individual allowed or expected to go on without any type of thought? How long?

Prabhupāda: I am not finished. We'll give question time after finishing the talk. (The parties go on quarreling.) All right, I am very glad you are curious, but please wait. Have some patience, because

we have not finished. As soon as we finish, after five minutes, ten minutes, I will tend to your question. Don't be impatient. Sit down. (The audience quiets down, and the Swami goes on with his talk.)

After five minutes...

Prabhupāda: All right. This gentleman is impatient. We shall stop here. Now what is your question, sir?

Man: Practically we tend to place emphasis on those we identify with the fact itself. Many people are meant to explain the why fores and wherefores of the metaphysical truth, that "I think, therefore I am."

Prabhupāda: What is your particular question?

Man: I have no answer to that question. Rather, but that I attempt, I live, I breathe.

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Man: So ability—tell me why I have nothing to do with it. May I understand the why fores and wheres?

Prabhupāda: That's all right.

Man: I have difficulty in you. I have difficulty in saying.

Prabhupāda: So long as we are in this material world there are so many problems.

Man: Not many problems. It is not many problems. This is the greatest fact. I have... I know...

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Man: I also know that the whys and wherefores of my particular...

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Man: I didn't come here... But let me explain my position. This isn't necessarily... I feel I must... I think the difference is to learn... You'll find it innumerable times by the same token... Maybe we are able to reconcile the fact of individual being for a long time to find out why...

Prabhupāda (turning to one of the boys): Roy, can you answer his question? It is a general question. You can answer, yes?

Roy turns sympathetically to the rambling questioner, and Prabhupāda addresses his audience: "Enough questions." His voice now seems tired and resigned: "Let us have kīrtana." And the Lower

East Side once again abates. The chanting begins: the brass cymbals, Prabhupāda's voice carrying the melody, and the audience responding. It goes for half an hour and then stops.

It is now 9:00. The audience sits before Swamiji while a boy brings him an apple, a small wooden bowl, and a knife. As most of the audience still sits and watches, gauging the after effects of the chanting as though it had been some new drug, the Swami cuts the apple in half, then in fourths, then in eighths, until there are many pieces. He takes one himself and asks one of the boys to pass the bowl around. Swamiji holds back his head and deftly pops a slice of apple into his mouth, without touching his fingers to his lips. He chews a bit, ruminating, his lips closed.

The members of the congregation munch silently on little pieces of apple. Prabhupāda stands, slips into his shoes, and exits through the side door.

* * *

As Prabhupāda retired to his apartment and his guests disappeared through the front door, back into the city, Don and Raphael would turn out the lights, lock the front door, and go to sleep on the floor in their blankets. Don and Raphael had needed a place to stay when they heard about the Swami's place. Prabhupāda had a policy that any boy who expressed even a little interest in becoming his student could stay in the storefront and make it his home. Of course, Prabhupāda would ask them to contribute toward the rent and meals, but if, like Don and Raphael, they had no money, then it was still all right, provided they helped in other ways. Don and Raphael were the first two boys to take advantage of Prabhupāda's offer. They were attracted to Swamiji and the chanting, but they weren't serious about his philosophy or the disciplines of devotional life. They had no jobs and no money, their hair was long and unkept, and they lived and slept in the same clothes day after day. Prabhupāda stipulated that at least while they were on the premises they could not break his rules—no intoxication, illicit sex, meat-eating, or gambling. He knew these two boarders weren't serious students, but he allowed them to stay, in hopes that gradually they would become serious.

Often, some wayfaring stranger would stop by, looking for a place to stay the night, and Don and Raphael would welcome him. An old white-bearded Indian-turned-Christian who was on a walking mission proclaiming the end of the world, and whose feet were covered with bandages, once slept for a few nights on a wooden bench in the storefront. Some nights, as many as ten drifters would seek shelter at the storefront, and Don and Raphael would admit them, explaining that the Swami didn't object, as long as they got up early. Even drifters whose only interest was a free meal could stay, and after the morning class and breakfast they would usually drift off again into māyā.

Don and Raphael were the Swami's steady boarders, although during the day they also went out, returning only for meals, sleep, and evening chanting. Occasionally they would bathe, and then they would use the Swami's bathroom up in his apartment. Sometimes they would hang out in the storefront during the day, and if someone stopped by, asking about the Swami's classes, they would tell the person all they knew (which wasn't much). They admitted that they weren't really into the Swami's philosophy, and they didn't claim to be his followers. If someone persisted in inquiring about the Swami's teachings, Don and Raphael would suggest, "Why don't you go up and talk to him? The Swami lives in the apartment building out back. Why don't you go up and see him?"

Prabhupāda usually stayed in his apartment. Occasionally he might look out his window and see, through the back windows of the storefront, that the light in the closet-sized bathroom had needlessly been left burning. Coming down to ask the boys to turn it off and not waste electricity, he might find a few boys lying on the floor talking or reading. Prabhupāda would stand gravely, asking them not to leave the light on, stressing the seriousness of wasting Kṛṣṇa's energy and money. He would stand dressed in khādī, that coarse handloomed cotton woven from hand spun threads, a cloth that to Americans appears somehow exotic. Even the saffron color of Prabhupāda's dhotī and chādar was exotic; produced from the traditional Indian dye, it was a dull, uneven color, different from anything Western. After Prabhupāda turned off the light, the boys seemed to have nothing to say and nothing more appropriate to do than look with interest at him for a long, awkward moment, and the Swami would leave without saying anything more.

Money was scarce. From his evening meetings he would usually collect about five or six dollars in change and bills. Don talked of going up to New England to pick apples and bring back money for the Swami. Raphael said something about some money coming. Prabhupāda waited, and depended on Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes he would walk back and forth in the courtyard between the buildings. Seeming mysterious to the neighbors, he would chant on his beads, his hand deep in his bead bag.

Mostly he kept to his room, working. As he had said during a lecture when living on the Bowery, "I am here always working at some thing, reading or writing—something, reading or writing—twenty-four hours." His mission of translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, of presenting the complete work in sixty volumes of four hundred pages each, could alone occupy all his days and nights. He worked at it whenever possible, sitting at his portable typewriter or translating the Sanskrit into English. He especially worked in the very early hours of the morning, when he would not be interrupted. He would comb through the Sanskrit and Bengali commentaries of the great ācāryas, following their explanations, selecting passages from them, adding his own knowledge and realization, and then laboriously weaving it all together and typing out his Bhaktivedanta purports. He had no means or immediate plans for financing the publishing of further volumes, but he continued in the faith that somehow they would be published.

He had a broad mission, broader even than translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and so he gave much of his time and energy to meeting visitors. Had his only aim been to write, then there would have been no need to have taken the risk and trouble of coming to America. Now many people were coming, and an important part of his mission was to talk to them and convince them of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His visitors were usually young men who had recently come to live on the Lower East Side. He had no secretary to screen his visitors, nor did he have scheduled visiting hours. Whenever anyone happened by, at any time, from early morning to ten at night, Prabhupāda would stop his typing or translating and speak with them. It was an open neighborhood, and many visitors would come by right off the street. Some were serious, but many were not; some even came intoxicated. Often they came not to inquire submissively but to challenge.

Once a young hippie on an LSD trip found his way upstairs and sat opposite the Swami: "Right now I am higher than you are," he announced. "I am God." Prabhupāda bowed his head slightly, his palms folded: "Please accept my obeisances," he said. Then he asked "God" to please leave. Others

admitted frankly that they were crazy or haunted by ghosts and sought relief from their mental suffering.

Lon Solomon: I was looking for spiritual centers—places where one can go, not like stores where they ask you to leave, but where you can actually talk to people and try to understand the ultimate truth. I would come to the Swami's, knowing it was definitely a spiritual center. There was definitely something there. I was on drugs and disturbed with the notion that I must be God, or some very important personality way out of proportion to my actual situation. I was actually in trouble, mentally deranged because of so much suffering, and I would kind of blow in to see him whenever I felt the whim to do so. I didn't make a point of going to his meetings, but a lot of times I would just come. One time I came and spent the night there. I was always welcome at any time to sleep in the storefront. I wanted to show the Swami what a sad case I was so he should definitely do something for me. He told me to join him and he could solve my problems. But I wasn't ready.

I was really into sex, and I wanted to know what he meant by illicit sex—what was his definition. He said to me, "This means sex outside of marriage." But I wasn't satisfied with the answer, and I asked him for more details. He told me to first consider the answer he had given me and then come back the next day and he would tell me more.

Then I showed up with a girl. The Swami came to the door and said, "I am very busy. I have my work, I have my translating. I cannot talk with you now." Well, that was the only time he didn't offer me full hospitality and full attention and talk with me as many questions as I had. So I left immediately with the girl. He was correct in his perception that I was simply going to see him just to try to impress the girl. He saw through it right away, and he rejected that type of association. But every time I came I was in trouble, and he always helped me.

Sometimes young men would come with scholarly pretensions to test the Swami's knowledge of Bhagavad-gītā. "You have read the Gītā," Prabhupāda would say, "so what is your conclusion? If you claim to know the Gītā, then you should know the conclusion that Kṛṣṇa is presenting." But most people didn't think that there was supposed to be a definite conclusion to the Gītā. And even if there were such a conclusion, that didn't mean they were supposed to arrange their life around it. The Gītā was a spiritual book, and you didn't have to follow it.

One young man approached the Swami asking, "What book will you lecture from next week? Will you be teaching the Tibetan Book of the Dead?" as if Prabhupāda would teach spirituality like a college survey course in world religions. "Everything is there in Bhagavad-gītā," Prabhupāda replied. "We could study one verse for three months."

And there were other questions: "What about Camus?"

"What is his philosophy?" Prabhupāda would ask.

"He says everything is absurd and the only philosophical question is whether to commit suicide."

"That means everything is absurd for him. The material world is absurd, but there is a spiritual world beyond this one. That means he does not know the soul. The soul cannot be killed."

Adherents of various thinkers approached him: "What about Nietzsche? Kafka? Timothy Leary? Bob Dylan?" Prabhupāda would ask what their philosophy was, and the particular follower would have to explain and defend his favorite intellectual hero.

"They are all mental speculators," Prabhupāda would say. "Here in this material world we are all conditioned souls. Your knowledge is imperfect. Your senses are blunt. What good is your opinion? We have to hear from the perfect authority, Kṛṣṇa."

"Do you mean to say that none of the great thinkers are God conscious?" a boy asked.

"Their sincerity is their God consciousness. But if we want perfect knowledge of God, then we have to consult śāstra."

Often there were challenges, but under the Swami's stare and hard logic, the challenger would usually trail off into thoughtful silence.

"Is the spiritual knowledge of China advanced?"

Prabhupāda would sometimes answer simply by making a sour face.

"Well, I am a follower of Vedānta myself."

"Do you know what Vedānta means? What is the first aphorism of the Vedānta-sūtra? Do you know?"

"No, I..."

"Then how can you speak of Vedānta? *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva ve dyaḥ*: Kṛṣṇa says that He is the goal of Vedānta. So if you are a Vedāntist, then you must become Kṛṣṇa conscious."

"What about the Buddha?"

"Do you follow him?"

"No."

"No, you just talk. Why don't you follow? Follow Kṛṣṇa, follow Christ, follow Buddha. But don't just talk."

"This sounds the same as Christianity. How is it any different?"

"It is the same: love of God. But who is a Christian? Who follows? The Bible teaches, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but all over the world, Christians are expert in killing. Do you know that? I believe the Christians say that Jesus Christ died for our sins—so why are you still sinning?"

Although Prabhupāda was a stranger to America, they were strangers to absolute knowledge. Whenever anyone would come to see him, he wouldn't waste time—he talked philosophy, reason, and argument. He constantly argued against atheism and impersonalism. He spoke strongly, to prove the existence of God and the universality of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He talked often and vigorously, day and night, meeting all kinds of questions and philosophies.

He would listen also, and he heard a wide range of local testimonies. He heard the dissatisfaction of young Americans with the war and with American society. One boy told him he didn't want to get married because he couldn't find a chaste girl; it was better to go with prostitutes. Another confided that his mother had planned to abort him, but at the last moment his grandmother had convinced her not to. He heard from homosexuals. Someone told him that a set of New Yorkers considered it chic to eat the flesh of aborted babies. And in every case, he told them the truth.

He talked with Marxists and explained that although Marx says that everything is the property of the State, the fact is that everything is the property of God. Only “spiritual communism,” which puts God in the center, can actually be successful. He discounted LSD visions as hallucinations and explained how God can be seen factually and what God looks like.

Although these one-time visitors came and went away, a few new friends began to stay on, watching the Swami deal with different guests. They began to appreciate the Swami's arguments, his concern for people, and his devotion to Kṛṣṇa. He seemed actually to know how to help people, and he invariably offered them Kṛṣṇa consciousness—as much as they could take—as the solution to their problems. A few began to take the Swami's message to heart.

* * *

“We shall call our society ISKCON.” Prabhupāda had laughed playfully when he first coined the acronym.

He had initiated the legal work of incorporation that spring, while still living on the Bowery. But even before its legal beginning, he had been talking about his “International Society for Krishna Consciousness,” and so it had appeared in letters to India and in *The Village Voice*. A friend had suggested a title that would sound more familiar to Westerners, “International Society for God Consciousness,” but Prabhupāda had insisted: “Krishna Consciousness.” “God” was a vague term, whereas “Krishna” was exact and scientific; “God consciousness” was spiritually weaker, less personal. And if Westerners didn't know that Kṛṣṇa was God, then the International Society for Krishna Consciousness would tell them, by spreading His glories “in every town and village.”

“Kṛṣṇa consciousness” was Prabhupāda's own rendering of a phrase from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Padyāvali*, written in the sixteenth century. Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvita: “to be absorbed in the mellow taste of executing devotional service to Kṛṣṇa.”

But to register ISKCON legally as a nonprofit, tax-exempt religion required money and a lawyer. Carl Yeargens had already gained some experience in forming religious, political, and social welfare groups, and when he had met Prabhupāda on the Bowery he had agreed to help. He had contacted his lawyer, Stephen Goldsmith.

Stephen Goldsmith, a young Jewish lawyer with a wife and two children and an office on Park Avenue, was interested in spiritual movements. When Carl told him about Prabhupāda's plans, he was immediately fascinated by the idea of setting up a religious corporation for an Indian swami. He visited Prabhupāda at 26 Second Avenue, and they discussed incorporation, tax exemption, Prabhupāda's immigration status, and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Mr. Goldsmith visited Prabhupāda several times. Once he brought his children, who liked the "soup" the Swami cooked. He began attending the evening lectures, where he was often the only nonhippie member of the congregation. One evening, having completed all the legal groundwork and being ready to complete the procedures for incorporation, Mr. Goldsmith came to Prabhupāda's lecture and kīrtana to get signatures from the trustees for the new society.

July 11

Prabhupāda is lecturing.

Mr. Goldsmith, wearing slacks and a shirt and tie, sits on the floor near the door, listening earnestly to the lecture, despite the distracting noises from the neighborhood. Prabhupāda has been explaining how scholars mislead innocent people with nondevotional interpretations of the Bhagavad-gītā, and now, in recognition of the attorney's respectable presence, and as if to catch Mr. Goldsmith's attention better, he introduces him into the subject of the talk.

I will give you a practical example of how things are misinterpreted. Just like our president, Mr. Goldsmith, he knows that expert lawyers, by interpretation, can do so many things. When I was in Calcutta, there was a rent tax passed by the government, and some expert lawyer changed the whole thing by his interpretation. The government had to reenact a whole law because their purpose was foiled by the interpretation of this lawyer. So we are not out for foiling the purpose of Kṛṣṇa, for which the Bhagavad-gītā was spoken. But unauthorized persons are trying to foil the purpose of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, that is unauthorized.

All right, Mr. Goldsmith, you can ask anything.

Mr. Goldsmith stands, and to the surprise of the people gathered, he makes a short announcement asking for signers on an incorporation document for the Swami's new religious movement.

Prabhupāda: They are present here. You can take the addresses now.

Mr. Goldsmith: I can take them now, yes.

Prabhupāda: Yes, you can. Bill, you can give your address. And Raphael, you can give yours. And Don... Roy... Mr. Greene.

As the meeting breaks up, those called on to sign as trustees come forward, standing around in the little storefront, waiting to leaf cursorily through the pages the lawyer has produced from his thin attache, and to sign as he directs. Yet not a soul among them is committed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Mr. Goldsmith meets his quota of signers—a handful of sympathizers with enough reverence toward the Swami to want to help him. The first trustees, who will hold office for a year, “until the first annual meeting of the corporation,” are Michael Grant (who puts down his name and address without ever reading the document), Mike's girl friend Jan, and James Greene. No one seriously intends to undertake any formal duties as trustee of the religious society, but they are happy to help the Swami by signing his fledgling society into legal existence.

According to law, a second group of trustees will assume office for the second year. They are Paul Gardiner, Roy, and Don. The trustees for the third year are Carl Yeargens, Bill Epstein, and Raphael.

None of them know exactly what the half a dozen, legal-sized typed pages mean, except that “Swamiji is forming a society.”

Why?

For tax exemption, in case someone gives a big donation, and for other benefits an official religious society might receive.

But these purposes hardly seem urgent or even relevant to the present situation. Who's going to make donations? Except maybe for Mr. Goldsmith, who has any money?

But Prabhupāda is planning for the future, and he's planning for much more than just tax exemptions. He is trying to serve his spiritual predecessors and fulfill the scriptural prediction of a spiritual movement that is to flourish for ten thousand years in the midst of the Age of Kali. Within the vast Kali Age (a period which is to last 432,000 years), the 1960s are but an insignificant moment.

The Vedas describe that the time of the universe revolves through a cycle of four “seasons,” or yugas, and Kali-yuga is the worst of times, in which all spiritual qualities of men diminish until humanity is finally reduced to a bestial civilization, devoid of human decency. However, the Vedic literature foretells a golden age of spiritual life, beginning after the advent of Lord Caitanya and lasting for ten thousand years—an eddy that runs against the current of Kali-yuga. With a vision that soars off to the end of the millennium and beyond, yet with his two feet solidly on the ground of Second Avenue, Prabhupāda has begun an International Society for Krishna Consciousness. He has many practical responsibilities: paying the rent, incorporating his society, and paving the way for a thriving worldwide congregation of devotees. Yet he doesn't see his humble beginning as limiting the greater scope of his divine mission. He knows that everything depends on Kṛṣṇa, so whether he succeeds or fails is up to the Supreme. He has only to try.

The purposes stated within ISKCON's articles of incorporation reveal Prabhupāda's thinking. They were seven points, similar to those given in the Prospectus for the League of Devotees he formed in Jhansi, India, in 1953. That attempt had been unsuccessful, yet his purposes remained unchanged.

Seven Purposes of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness:

- (a) To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all peoples in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world.
- (b) To propagate a consciousness of Krishna, as it is revealed in the Bhagavad Gītā and Śrīmad Bhagwatam.
- (c) To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Krishna, the prime entity, thus to develop the idea within the members, and humanity at large, that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead (Krishna).
- (d) To teach and encourage the sankirtan movement, congregational chanting of the holy name of God as revealed in the teachings of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
- (e) To erect for the members and for society at large, a holy place of transcendental pastimes, dedicated to the Personality of Krishna.
- (f) To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler and more natural way of life.
- (g) With a view towards achieving the aforementioned Purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, magazines, books and other writings.

Regardless of what ISKCON's charter members thought of the society's purposes, Prabhupāda saw them as imminent realities. As Mr. Ruben, the subway conductor who had met Prabhupāda on a Manhattan park bench in 1965, had noted: "He seemed to know that he would have temples filled up with devotees. 'There are temples and books,' he said. 'They are existing, they are there, but the time is separating us from them.'"

The first purpose mentioned in the charter was propagation. "Preaching" was the word Prabhupāda most often used. For him, preaching had a much broader significance than mere sermonizing. Preaching meant glorious, selfless adventures on behalf of the Supreme Lord. Lord Caitanya had preached by walking all over southern India and causing thousands of people to chant and dance with Him in ecstasy. Lord Kṛṣṇa had preached the Bhagavad-gītā while standing with Arjuna in his chariot on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Lord Buddha had preached, Lord Jesus had preached, and all pure devotees preach.

ISKCON's preaching would achieve what the League of Nations and the United Nations had failed to achieve—"real unity and peace in the world." ISKCON workers would bring peace to a world deeply afflicted by materialism and strife. They would "systematically propagate spiritual knowledge," knowledge of the nonsectarian science of God. It was not that a new religion was being born in July of 1966; rather, the eternal preaching of Godhead, known as saṅkīrtana, was being transplanted from East to West.

The society's members would join together, and by hearing the teachings of Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, they would come to realize that each

was a spirit soul, eternally related to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They would then preach this to "humanity at large," especially through saṅkīrtana, the chanting of the holy name of God.

ISKCON would also erect "a holy place of transcendental pastimes dedicated to the Personality of Krishna." Was this something beyond the storefront? Yes, certainly. He never thought small: "He seemed to know that he would have temples filled up with devotees."

He wanted ISKCON to demonstrate "a simple, more natural way of life." Such a life (Prabhupāda thought of the villages of India, where people lived just as Kṛṣṇa had lived) was most conducive to developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

And all six of these purposes would be achieved by the seventh: ISKCON would publish and distribute literature. This was the special instruction Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had given to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He had specifically told him one day in 1932 at Rādhā-kuṇḍa in Vṛndāvana, "If you ever get any money, publish books."

Certainly none of the signers saw any immediate shape to the Swami's dream, yet these seven purposes were not simply theistic rhetoric invented to convince a few New York State government officials. Prabhupāda meant to enact every item in the charter.

Of course, he was now working in extremely limited circumstances. "The principal place of worship, located at 26 Second Avenue, in the city, county, and state of New York," was the sole headquarters for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Yet Prabhupāda insisted that he was not living at 26 Second Avenue, New York City. His vision was transcendental. His Guru Mahārāja had gone out from the traditional holy places of spiritual meditation to preach in cities like Calcutta, Bombay, and Delhi. And yet Prabhupāda would say that his spiritual master had not really been living in any of those cities, but was always in Vaikuṇṭha, the spiritual world, because of his absorption in devotional service.

Similarly, the place of worship, 26 Second Avenue, was not a New York storefront, a former curiosity shop. The storefront and the apartment had been spiritualized and were now a transcendental haven. "Society at large" could come here, the whole world could take shelter here, regardless of race or religion. Plain, small, and impoverished as it was, Prabhupāda regarded the storefront as "a holy place of transcendental pastimes, dedicated to the Personality of Krishna." It was a world headquarters, a publishing house, a sacred place of pilgrimage, and a center from which an army of devotees could issue forth and chant the holy names of God in all the streets in the world. The entire universe could receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which was beginning here.

* * *

In Keith, Prabhupāda had a serious follower. Within a week of their meeting, Keith had moved out of the Mott Street apartment and was living with Prabhupāda. He still dressed in his ragged denim shorts and T-shirt, but he began to do all the Swami's shopping and cooking. While in India, Keith

had learned some of the etiquette of reverence toward a holy man and the principles of discipleship. His friends watched him curiously as he dedicated himself to the Swami.

Keith: I saw that he was cooking, so I asked him if I could help. And he was very happy at the suggestion. The first couple of times, he took me shopping, and after that I mostly did it. He showed me how to make *capātīs* without a rolling pin by pressing out the dough with your fingers. Every day we would make *capātīs*, rice, *dāl*, and curries.

So Keith became the dependable cook and housekeeper in Prabhupāda's apartment. Meanwhile, at the Mott Street apartment, the roommates' favorite topic for discussion was their relationship with the Swami. Everyone thought it was a serious relationship. They knew Swamiji was guru. And when they heard that he would be giving daily classes at 6 A.M., up in his apartment, they were eager to attend.

Keith: I used to walk along the Bowery and look for flowers for him. When there were no flowers, I would take a straw or some grass. I loved going over there in the morning.

Howard: I would walk very briskly over to Swamiji's, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, feeling better than ever before. Miraculously, the Lower East Side no longer looked drab. The sidewalks and buildings seemed to sparkle, and in the early morning before the smog set in, the sky was red and golden.

Chuck: I brought a few grapes and came to the door of the Swami. This was all new. Previously I would always walk toward McDougall Street, toward Bohemia, aesthetic New York—and now I was walking to the Lower East Side toward the business district, where there were no freaks, artists, or musicians, but simply straight buildings. And somehow, outside the carnival atmosphere, there was the richest attraction for the senses and the heart.

Howard: I would sing all the way to the foyer, then ring the buzzer marked “A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.” And the door would buzz and open and I would walk through the hallway into the small patio and up to his small second-floor apartment, tiptoeing quietly so as not to wake up the neighbors.

Chuck: I came into the hall of his building, and there were many, many names printed on plaques over the mailboxes. I immediately found the name, “A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami,” handwritten on a slip of torn paper, slipped into one of the slots. I rang the buzzer and waited. After a few moments, the door buzzed loudly, and I entered through the security lock. I walked through the small garden into the rear building and upstairs.

Prabhupāda held his classes for almost two months in the privacy of his room, the same room where he typed and talked to guests. To Keith it was not simply a class in philosophy but a mystical experience of sweetness.

Keith: The sound of his voice, the sun coming up... we'd chant for a few minutes, softly clapping hands, and Swamiji would speak. The thing that got me most was simply the sound of his voice, especially while he was chanting Sanskrit. It was like music to my ears to hear him speak the raw sound.

So as not to disturb the neighbors, Prabhupāda would say, "Chant softly," and he asked the boys to clap softly, so softly that their hands barely touched. Then he would chant the prayers to the spiritual master: *samsāra-dāvānala-lidha-loka*. "The spiritual master is receiving benediction from the ocean of mercy. Just as a cloud pours water on a forest fire to extinguish it, so the spiritual master extinguishes the blazing fire of material existence." With his eyes closed, he sat singing softly in the dim morning light. The few who attended—Keith, Howard, Chuck, Steve, Wally—sat entranced. Never before had the Swami been so appreciated.

Chuck: The Swami was sitting there, and in the mornings he would look not shiny and brilliant, but very withdrawn. He looked as if he could sit like a stone maybe forever. His eyes were only two tiny slits of glistening light. He took out his cymbals and played lightly on the edge—one, two, three—and he began to sing in a deep voice that was almost atonal in its intervals. It was a melody-monotone that did not express happiness or sadness—a timeless chant that told no story. We chanted along with him as best we could, but several times Swamiji stopped and said, "Softly." After about thirty minutes of chanting, we stopped. Then he opened his eyes wider and said, "We must chant softly, because sometimes the neighbors are complaining."

After singing, the Swami would give one of the boys a copy of Dr. Radhakrishnan's edition of *Bhagavad-gītā* to read aloud from. He would correct their mispronunciations and then explain each verse. Because there were only a few people present, there was always ample time for everyone to discuss the philosophy. The class would sometimes run an hour and a half and cover three or four verses.

Steve: Swamiji mentioned that mangoes were the king of all fruits, and he even mentioned that they were not easily available in this country. It occurred to me that I could bring him mangoes. There was a store on First Avenue that always kept a stock of fresh mangoes in the cooler. I began a regular habit. Every day after getting off work, I would purchase one nice mango and bring it to Swamiji.

Wally: Some of the boys would say, "I'm doing this for the Swami." So I went to him and said, "Is there something I can do for you?" So he told me I could take notes in his class.

The boys were sure that their service to Swamiji was spiritual, devotional service. By serving the spiritual master, who was a representative of Kṛṣṇa, you were serving Kṛṣṇa directly.

One morning Prabhupāda told Howard that he needed help in spreading the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Howard wanted to help, so he offered to type the Swami's manuscripts of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Howard: The first words of the first verse read, "O the King." And naturally I wondered whether "O" was the king's name and "the king" stood in apposition. After some time I figured out that "O king" was intended instead. I didn't make the correction without his permission. "Yes," he said, "change it then." I began to point out a few changes and inform him that if he wanted I could make corrections, that I had a master's in English and taught last year at Ohio State. "Oh, yes," Swamiji said. "Do it. Put it nicely."

He was giving them the idea of devotional service. "A devotee may not be perfect at first," he said, "but if he is engaged in service, once that service has begun he can be purified. Service is always there, in the material world or the spiritual." But service in the material world could not bring satisfaction to the self—only bhakti, purified service, service rendered to Kṛṣṇa, could do that. And the best way to serve Kṛṣṇa was to serve the representative of Kṛṣṇa.

They picked it up quickly. It was something you could do easily; it was not difficult like meditation—it was activity. You did something, but you did it for Kṛṣṇa. They had seen Swamiji respond to the Bowery bum who had come with a gift of toilet paper. "Just see," Swamiji had said, "he is not in order, but he thought, 'Let me give some service.'" But service had to be done voluntarily, out of love, not by force.

Wally: Swamiji once asked me, "Do you think you could wear the Vaiṣṇava tilaka when you are on the streets?" I said, "Well, I would feel funny doing it, but if you want me to I will." And Swamiji said, "No, I don't ask you to do anything you don't want to do."

Steve: One day when I brought my daily mango to him he was in his room surrounded by devotees. I gave him my mango and sat down, and he said, "Very good boy." The way he said it, as if I were just a tiny little boy, made everyone in the room laugh, and I felt foolish. Swamiji, however, then changed their mood by saying, "No. This is actually love. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness." And then they didn't laugh.

When Howard first volunteered to do editing, he spent the whole morning working in Swamiji's room. "If there is any more typing." Howard said, "let me know. I could take it back to Mott Street and type there."

"More? There's lots more," Swamiji said. He opened the closet and pulled out two large bundles of manuscripts tied in saffron cloth. There were thousands of pages, single-spaced manuscripts of Prabhupāda's translations of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Howard stood before them, astonished. "It's a lifetime of typing," he said. And Prabhupāda smiled and said, "Oh, yes, many lifetimes."

* * *

Because of Prabhupāda's presence and the words that he spoke there and the kīrtanas, everyone was already referring to the storefront as "the temple." But still it was just a bare, squalid storefront. The inspiration to decorate the place came from the Mott Street boys.

Howard, Keith, and Wally devised a scheme to surprise the Swami when he came to the evening kīrtana. Wally removed the curtains from their apartment, took them to the laundromat (where they turned the water dark brown from filth), and then dyed them purple. The Mott Street apartment was decorated with posters, paintings, and large decorative silk hangings that Howard and Keith had brought back from India. The boys gathered up all their pictures, tapestries, incense burners, and other paraphernalia and took them, along with the purple curtains, to the storefront, where they began their day of decorating.

At the storefront the boys constructed a wooden platform for Prabhupāda to sit on and covered it with old velvet cloth. Behind the platform, on the rear wall between the two windows to the courtyard, they hung the purple curtains, flanked by a pair of orange ones. Against one orange panel, just above Swamiji's sitting place, they hung a large original painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on a circular canvas that James Greene had done. Prabhupāda had commissioned James, giving him the dust jacket from his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, with its crude Indian drawing, as a model. The figures of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were somewhat abstract, but the Lower East Side critics who frequented the storefront hailed the work as a wonderful achievement.

Keith and Howard were less confident that Prabhupāda would approve of their paintings and prints from India, so they hung them near the street side of the temple, away from Swamiji's seat. One of these prints, well known in India, was of Hanumān carrying a mountain through the sky to Lord Rāmacandra. The boys had no idea what kind of being Hanumān was. They thought perhaps he was a cat, because of the shape of his upper lip. Then there was the picture of a male person with six arms—two arms, painted greenish, held a bow and arrow; another pair, bluish, held a flute; and the third pair, golden, held a stick and bowl.

By late afternoon they had covered the sitting platform, hung the curtains, tacked up the decorative silks and prints and hung the paintings, and were decorating the dais with flowers and candlesticks. Someone brought a pillow for Swamiji to sit on and a faded cushion from an overstuffed chair for a backrest.

In addition to the Mott Street cache, Robert Nelson took one of his grandfather's Belgian-style Oriental rugs from his garage in the suburbs and brought it by subway to 26 Second Avenue. Even Raphael and Don took part in the decorating.

The secret was well kept, and the boys waited to see Swamiji's response. That night, when he walked in to begin the kīrtana, he looked at the newly decorated temple (there was even incense burning), and he raised his eyebrows in satisfaction. "You are advancing," he said as he looked around the room, smiling broadly. "Yes," he added, "this is Kṛṣṇa consciousness." His sudden, happy mood seemed almost like their reward for their earnest labors. He then stepped up onto the platform—while the boys held their breaths, hoping it would be sturdy—and he sat, looking out at the devotees and the decorations.

They had pleased him. But he now assumed a feature of extreme gravity, and though they knew he was certainly the same Swamiji, their titterings stuck in their throats, and their happy glances to each other suddenly abated in uncertainty and nervousness. As they regarded Swamiji's gravity, their joy of a few moments before seemed suddenly childish. As a cloud quickly covers the sun like a dark shade, Prabhupāda changed his mood from jolly to grave—and they spontaneously resolved to become equally grave and sober. He picked up the karatālas and again smiled a ray of appreciation, and their hearts beamed back.

The temple was still a tiny storefront, with many hidden and unhidden cockroaches, a tilted floor, and poor lighting. But because many of the decorations were from India, it had an authentic atmosphere, especially with Swamiji present on the dais. Now guests who entered were suddenly in a little Indian temple.

Mike Grant: I came one evening, and all of a sudden there were carpets on the floor, pictures on the wall, and paintings. Just all of a sudden it had blossomed and was full of people. I was amazed how in just a matter of days people had brought so many wonderful things. When I came that evening and saw how it had been decorated, then I wasn't so much worried that he was going to make it. I thought it was really beginning to take hold now.

Prabhupāda looked at his group of followers. He was moved by their offering him a seat of honor and their attempts at decorating Kṛṣṇa's storefront. To see a devotee make an offering to Kṛṣṇa was not new for him. But this was new. In New York, "this horrible place," the seed of bhakti was growing, and naturally, as the gardener of that tender sprout, he was touched by Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Glancing at the pictures on the wall he said, "Tomorrow I will come look at the pictures and tell you which are good."

The next day, Prabhupāda came down to appraise the new artwork on display. One framed watercolor painting was of a man playing a drum while a girl danced. "This one is all right," he said. But another painting of a woman was more mundane, and he said, "No, this painting is not so good." He walked to the back of the temple, followed anxiously by Howard, Keith, and Wally. When he came upon the painting of the six-armed person, he said, "Oh, this is very nice."

"Who is it?" Wally asked.

"This is Lord Caitanya," Prabhupāda replied.

"Why does He have six arms?"

"Because He showed Himself to be both Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. These are the arms of Rāma, and these are the arms of Kṛṣṇa."

"What are the other two arms?" Keith asked.

"Those are the arms of a sannyāsī."

He went to the next picture. "This is also very nice."

"Who is it?" Howard asked.

"This is Hanumān."

"Is he a cat?"

"No," Prabhupāda replied. "He is a monkey."

Hanumān is glorified in the scripture Rāmāyaṇa as the valiant, faithful servant of Lord Rāmacandra. Millions of Indians worship the incarnation of Lord Rāma and His servitor Hanumān, whose exploits are perennially exhibited in theater, cinema, art, and temple worship. In not knowing who

Hanumān was, the Mott Street boys were no less ignorant than the old ladies uptown who, when Prabhupāda had asked whether any of them had seen a picture of Kṛṣṇa, had all stared blankly. The Lower East Side mystics didn't know Hanumān from a cat, and they had brought back from their hashish version of India a picture of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu without even knowing who He was. Yet there was an important difference between these boys and the ladies uptown: the boys were serving Swamiji and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. They were through with material life and the middle-class work-reward syndrome. Their hearts had awakened to Swamiji's promise of expanded Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and they sensed in his personal company something exalted. Like the Bowery bum who had donated toilet paper during Prabhupāda's lecture, the Lower East Side boys did not have their minds quite in order, and yet, as Prabhupāda saw it, Kṛṣṇa was guiding them from within their hearts. Prabhupāda knew they would change for the better by chanting and hearing about Kṛṣṇa.

* * *

The summer of 1966 moved into August, and Prabhupāda kept good health. For him these were happy days. New Yorkers complained of the summer heat waves, but this caused no inconvenience to one accustomed to the 100-degree-plus temperatures of Vṛndāvana's blazing summers. "It is like India," he said, as he went without a shirt, seeming relaxed and at home. He had thought that in America he would have to subsist on boiled potatoes (otherwise there would be nothing but meat), but here he was happily eating the same rice, dāl, and capātis, and cooking on the same three-stacked cooker as in India. Work on the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam had also gone on regularly since he had moved into the Second Avenue apartment. And now Kṛṣṇa was bringing these sincere young men who were cooking, typing, hearing him regularly, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and asking for more.

Prabhupāda was still a solitary preacher, free to stay or go, writing his books in his own intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa—quite independent of the boys in the storefront. But now he had taken the International Society for Krishna Consciousness as his spiritual child. The inquiring young men, some of whom had already been chanting steadily for over a month, were like stumbling spiritual infants, and he felt responsible for guiding them. They were beginning to consider him their spiritual master, trusting him to lead them into spiritual life. Although they were unable to immediately follow the multifarious rules that brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas in India followed, he was hopeful. According to Rūpa Gosvāmī the most important principle was that one should "somehow or other" become Kṛṣṇa conscious. People should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and render devotional service. They should engage whatever they had in the service of Kṛṣṇa. And Prabhupāda was exercising this basic principle of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the furthest limit the history of Vaiṣṇavism had ever seen.

Although he was engaging the boys in cooking and typing, Prabhupāda was not doing any less himself. Rather, for every sincere soul who came forward to ask for service, a hundred came who wanted not to serve but to challenge. Speaking to them, sometimes shouting and pounding his fists, Prabhupāda defended Kṛṣṇa against the Māyāvāda philosophy. This was also his service to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. He had not come to America to retire. So with the passing of each new day came yet another confirmation that his work and his followers and his challengers would only increase.

How much he could do was up to Kṛṣṇa. "I am an old man," he said. "I may go away at any moment." But if he were to "go away" now, certainly Kṛṣṇa consciousness would also go away, because the Kṛṣṇa consciousness society was nothing but him: his figure leading the chanting while his head moved back and forth in small motions of ecstasy, his figure walking in and out of the temple through the courtyard or into the apartment, his person sitting down smilingly to discuss philosophy by the hour—he was the sole bearer and maintainer of the small, fragile, controlled atmosphere of Kṛṣṇa consciousness on New York's Lower East Side.

SPL 19: Planting the Seed

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Planting the Seed

"Does what you told us this morning," Howard asked, "mean we are supposed to accept the spiritual master to be God?"

"That means he is due the same respect as God, being God's representative," Prabhupāda replied calmly.

"Then he is not God?"

"No," Prabhupāda said, "God is God. The spiritual master is His representative. Therefore, he is as good as God because he can deliver God to the sincere disciple. Is that clear?"

—from dialogue with Hayagrīva

= August 1966

It was makeshift—a storefront-turned-temple and a two-room apartment transformed into the guru's residence and study—but it was complete nonetheless. It was a complete monastery amid the city slums. The temple (the storefront) was quickly becoming known among the hip underground of the Lower East Side; the courtyard was a strangely peaceful place for aspiring monks, with its little garden, bird sanctuary, and trees, squeezed in between the front and rear buildings; the Swami's back room was the inner sanctum of the monastery. Each room had a flavor all its own—or rather, it took on its particular character from the Swami's activities there.

The temple room was his kīrtana and lecture hall. The lecture was always serious and formal. Even from the beginning, when there was no dais and he had to sit on a straw mat facing a few guests, it was clear he was here to instruct, not to invite casual give-and-take dialogue. Questions had to wait until he finished speaking. The audience would sit on the floor and listen for forty-five minutes as he delivered the Vedic knowledge intact, always speaking on the basis of Vedic authority—quoting Sanskrit, quoting the previous spiritual masters, delivering perfect knowledge supported with reason and argument. While contending with noises of the street, he lectured with exacting scholarship and deeply committed devotion. It appeared that he had long ago mastered all the

references and conclusions of his predecessors and had even come to anticipate all intellectual challenges.

He also held kīrtanas in the storefront. Like the lectures, the kīrtanas were serious, but they were not so formal; Prabhupāda was lenient during kīrtana. Visitors would bring harmoniums, wooden flutes, guitars, and they would follow the melody or create their own improvisations. Someone brought an old string bass and bow, and an inspired guest could always pick up the bow and play along. Some of the boys had found the innards of an upright piano, waiting on the curb with someone's garbage, and they had brought it to the temple and placed it near the entrance. During a kīrtana, freewheeling guests would run their hands over the wires, creating strange vibrations. Robert Nelson, several weeks back, had brought a large cymbal that now hung from the ceiling, dangling close by the Swami's dais.

But there was a limit to the extravagance. Sometimes when a newcomer picked up the karatālas and played them in a beat other than the standard one-two-three, Swamiji would ask one of the boys to correct him, even at the risk of offending the guest. Prabhupāda led the chanting and drummed with one hand on a small bongo. Even on this little bongo drum, he played Bengali mṛdaṅga rhythms so interesting that a local conga drummer used to come just to hear: "The Swami gets in some good licks."

The Swami's kīrtanas were a new high, and the boys would glance at each other with widening eyes and shaking heads as they responded to his chanting, comparing it to their previous drug experiences and signaling each other favorably: "This is great. It's better than LSD!" "Hey, man, I'm really getting high on this." And Prabhupāda encouraged their newfound intoxication.

As maestro of these kīrtanas, he was also acting expertly as guru. Lord Caitanya had said, "There are no hard-and-fast rules for chanting the holy name," and Prabhupāda brought the chanting to the Lower East Side just that way. "A kindergarten of spiritual life," he once called the temple. Here he taught the ABCs of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, lecturing from Bhagavad-gītā and leading the group chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes, after the final kīrtana he would invite those who were interested to join him for further talks in his apartment.

In the back room of his apartment Prabhupāda was usually alone, especially in the early morning hours—two, three, and four A.M.—when almost no one else was awake. In these early hours his room was silent, and he worked alone in the intimacy of his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. He would sit on the floor behind his suitcase-desk, worshiping Kṛṣṇa by typing the translations and purports of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

But this same back room was also used for meetings, and anyone who brought himself to knock on the Swami's door could enter and speak with him at any time, face to face. Prabhupāda would sit back from his typewriter and give his time to talking, listening, answering questions, sometimes arguing or joking. A visitor might sit alone with him for half an hour before someone else would knock and Swamiji would invite the newcomer to join them. New guests would come and others would go, but Swamiji stayed and sat and talked.

Generally, visits were formal—his guests would ask philosophical questions, and he would answer, much the same as after a lecture in the storefront. But occasionally some of the boys who were becoming serious followers would monopolize his time—especially on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, when there was no evening lecture in the temple. Often they would ask him personal questions: What was it like when he first came to New York? What about India? Did he have followers there? Were his family members devotees of Kṛṣṇa? What was his spiritual master like? And then Prabhupāda would talk in a different way—quieter, more intimate and humorous.

He told how one morning in New York he had first seen snow and thought someone had whitewashed the buildings. He told how he had spoken at several churches in Butler, and when the boys asked what kind of churches they were he smiled and replied, "I don't know," and they laughed with him. He would reminisce freely about the British control of India and about Indian politics. He told them it was not so much Gandhi as Subhas Chandra Bose who had liberated India. Subhas Chandra Bose had gone outside of India and started the Indian National Army; he entered into an agreement with Hitler that Indian soldiers fighting for British India who surrendered to the Germans could be returned to the Indian National Army to fight against the British. And it was this show of force by Bose, more than Gandhi's nonviolence, which led to India's independence.

He talked of his childhood at the turn of the century, when street lamps were gas-lit, and carriages and horse-drawn trams were the only vehicles on Calcutta's dusty streets. These talks charmed the boys even more than the transcendental philosophy of Bhagavad-gītā and drew them affectionately to him. He told about his father, Gour Mohan De, a pure Vaiṣṇava. His father had been a cloth merchant, and his family had been intimately related with the aristocratic Mulliks of Calcutta. The Mulliks had a Deity of Kṛṣṇa, and Prabhupāda's father had given him a Deity to worship as a child. He used to imitate the worship of the Govinda Deity in the Mulliks' temple. As a boy, he had held his own Ratha-yātrā festivals each year, imitating in miniature the gigantic festival at Jagannātha Purī, and his father's friends used to joke: "Oh, the Ratha-yātrā ceremony is going on at your home, and you do not invite us? What is this?" His father would reply, "This is a child's play, that's all." But the neighbors said, "Oh, child's play? You are avoiding us by saying it's for children?"

Prabhupāda fondly remembered his father, who had never wanted him to be a worldly man, who had given him lessons in mṛdaṅga, and who had prayed to visiting sādhus that one day the boy would grow up to be a devotee of Rādhārāṇī.

One night he told how he had met his spiritual master. He told how he had begun his own chemical business but had left home and in 1959 had taken sannyāsa. The boys were interested, but so ignorant of the things Prabhupāda was talking about that at the mention of a word like mṛdaṅga or sannyāsa they would have to ask what it meant, and he would go on conversational tangents describing Indian spices, Indian drums, even Indian women. And whatever he spoke about, he would eventually shine upon it the light of the śāstra. He did not ration out such talk, but gave it out abundantly by the hour, day after day, as long as there was a real, live inquirer.

At noon the front room became a dining hall and in the evenings a place of intimate worship. Prabhupāda had kept the room, with its twelve-foot-square hardwood parquet floor, clean and bare; the solitary coffee table against the wall between the two courtyard windows was the only furniture.

Daily at noon a dozen men were now taking lunch here with him. The meal was cooked by Keith, who spent the whole morning in the kitchen.

At first Keith had cooked only for the Swami. He had mastered the art of cooking dāl, rice, and sabjī in the Swami's three-tiered boiler, and usually there had been enough for one or two guests as well. But soon more guests had begun to gather, and Prabhupāda had told Keith to increase the quantity (abandoning the small three-tiered cooker) until he was cooking for a dozen hungry men. The boarders, Raphael and Don, though not so interested in the Swami's talk, would arrive punctually each day for prasādam, usually with a friend or two who had wandered into the storefront. Steve would drop by from his job at the welfare office. The Mott Street group would come. And there were others.

The kitchen was stocked with standard Indian spices: fresh chilies, fresh ginger root, whole cumin seeds, turmeric, and asafoetida. Keith mastered the basic cooking techniques and passed them on to Chuck, who became his assistant. Some of the other boys would stand at the doorway of the narrow kitchenette to watch Keith, as one thick, pancakelike capātī after another blew up like an inflated football over the open flame and then took its place in the steaming stack.

While the fine bhasmatī rice boiled to a moist, fluffy-white finish and the sabjī simmered, the noon cooking would climax with "the chaunce." Keith prepared the chaunce exactly as Swamiji had shown him. Over the flame he set a small metal cup, half-filled with clarified butter, and then put in cumin seeds. When the seeds turned almost black he added chilies, and as the chilies blackened, a choking smoke began to pour from the cup. Now the chaunce was ready. With his cook's tongs, Keith lifted the cup, its boiling, crackling mixture fuming like a sorcerer's kettle, and brought it to the edge of the pot of boiling dāl. He opened the tight cover slightly, dumped the boiling chaunce into the dāl with a flick of his wrist, and immediately replaced the lid... POW! The meeting of the chaunce and dāl created an explosion, which was then greeted by cheers from the doorway, signifying that the cooking was now complete. This final operation was so volatile that it once blew the top of the pot to the ceiling with a loud smash, causing minor burns to Keith's hand. Some of the neighbors complained of acrid, penetrating fumes. But the devotees loved it.

When lunch was ready, Swamiji would wash his hands and mouth in the bathroom and come out into the front room, his soft, pink-bottomed feet always bare, his saffron dhotī reaching down to his ankles. He would stand by the coffee table, which held the picture of Lord Caitanya and His associates, while his own associates stood around him against the walls. Keith would bring in a big tray of capātīs, stacked by the dozens, and place it on the floor before the altar table along with pots of rice, dāl, and sabjī. Swamiji would then recite the Bengali prayer for offering food to the Lord, and all present would follow him by bowing down, knees and head to the floor, and approximating the Bengali prayer one word at a time. While the steam and mixed aromas drifted up like an offering of incense before the picture of Lord Caitanya, the Swami's followers bowed their heads to the wooden floor and mumbled the prayer.

Prabhupāda then sat with his friends, eating the same prasādam as they, with the addition of a banana and a metal bowl full of hot milk. He would slice the banana by pushing it downward against the edge of the bowl, letting the slices fall into the hot milk.

Prabhupāda's open decree that everyone should eat as much prasādam as possible created a humorous mood and a family feeling. No one was allowed simply to sit, picking at his food, nibbling politely. They ate with a gusto Swamiji almost insisted upon. If he saw someone not eating heartily, he would call the person's name and smilingly protest, "Why are you not eating? Take prasādam." And he would laugh. "When I was coming to your country on the boat," he said, "I thought, 'How will the Americans ever eat this food?'" And as the boys pushed their plates forward for more, Keith would serve seconds—more rice, dāl, capātīs, and sabjī.

After all, it was spiritual. You were supposed to eat a lot. It would purify you. It would free you from māyā. Besides, it was good, delicious, spicy. This was better than American food. It was like chanting. It was far out. You got high from eating this food.

They ate with the right hand, Indian style. Keith and Howard had already learned this and had even tasted similar dishes, but as they told the Swami and a room full of believers, the food in India had never been this good.

One boy, Stanley, was quite young, and Prabhupāda, almost like a doting father, watched over him as he ate. Stanley's mother had personally met Prabhupāda and said that only if he took personal care of her son would she allow him to live in the monastery. Prabhupāda complied. He diligently encouraged the boy until Stanley gradually took on a voracious appetite and began consuming ten capātīs at a sitting (and would have taken more had Swamiji not told him to stop). But aside from Swamiji's limiting Stanley to ten capātīs, the word was always "More... take more." When Prabhupāda was finished, he would rise and leave the room, Keith would catch a couple of volunteers to help him clean, and the others would leave.

Occasionally, on a Sunday, Prabhupāda himself would cook a feast with special Indian dishes.

Steve: Swamiji personally cooked the prasādam and then served it to us upstairs in his front room. We all sat in rows, and I remember him walking up and down in between the rows of boys, passing before us with his bare feet and serving us with a spoon from different pots. He would ask what did we want—did we want more of this? And he would serve us with pleasure. These dishes were not ordinary, but sweets and savories—like sweet rice and kacaurīs—with special tastes. Even after we had all taken a full plate, he would come back and ask us to take more.

Once he came up to me and asked what I would like more of—would I like some more sweet rice? In my early misconception of spiritual life, I thought I should deny myself what I liked best, so I asked for some more plain rice. But even that "plain" rice was fancy yellow rice with fried cheese balls.

On off nights his apartment was quiet. He might remain alone for the whole evening, typing and translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, or talking in a relaxed atmosphere to just one or two guests until ten. But on meeting nights—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—there was activity in every room of his apartment. He wasn't alone any more. His new followers were helping him, and they shared in his spirit of trying to get people to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and hear of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In the back room, he worked on his translation of the Bhāgavatam or spoke with guests up until six, when he would go to take his bath. Sometimes he would have to wait until the bathroom was free. He had introduced his young followers to the practice of taking two baths a day, and now he was sometimes inconvenienced by having to share his bathroom.

After his bath he would come into the front room, where his assembled followers would sit around him. He would sit on a mat facing his picture of the Pañca-tattva, and after putting a few drops of water in his left palm from a small metal spoon and bowl, he would rub a lump of Vṛndāvana clay in the water, making a wet paste. He would then apply the clay markings of Vaiṣṇava tilaka, dipping into the yellowish paste in his left hand with the ring finger of his right. He would scrape wet clay from his palm, and while looking into a small mirror which he held deftly between the thumb and pinkie of his left hand, he would mark a vertical clay strip up his forehead and then trim the clay into two parallel lines by placing the little finger of his right hand between his eyebrows and running it upward past the hairline, clearing a path in the still-moist clay. Then he marked eleven other places on his body, while the boys sat observing, sometimes asking questions or sometimes speaking their own understandings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda: My Guru Mahārāja used to put on tilaka without a mirror.

Devotee: Did it come out neat?

Prabhupāda: Neat or not neat, that does not matter. Yes, it was also neat.

Prabhupāda would then silently recite the Gāyatrī mantra. Holding his brāhmaṇa's sacred thread and looping it around his right thumb, he would sit erect, silently moving his lips. His bare shoulders and arms were quite thin as was his chest, but he had a round, slightly protruding belly. His complexion was as satiny smooth as a young boy's, except for his face, which bore signs of age. The movements of his hands were methodical, aristocratic, yet delicate.

He picked up two brass bells in his left hand and began ringing them. Then, lighting two sticks of incense from the candle near the picture of Lord Caitanya and His associates, he began waving the incense slowly in small circles before Lord Caitanya, while still ringing the bells. He looked deeply at the picture and continued cutting spirals of fragrant smoke, all the while ringing the bells. None of the boys knew what he was doing, although he did it every evening. But it was a ceremony. It meant something. The boys began to call the ceremony "bells."

After bells Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, it would usually be time for the evening kīrtana. Some of the devotees would already be downstairs greeting guests and explaining about the Swami and the chanting. But without the Swami, nothing could begin. No one knew how to sing or drum, and no one dared think of leading the mantra-chanting without him. Only when he entered at seven o'clock could they begin.

Freshly showered and dressed in his clean Indian handwoven cloth, his arms and body decorated with the arrowlike Vaiṣṇava markings, Prabhupāda would leave his apartment and go downstairs to face another ecstatic opportunity to glorify Kṛṣṇa. The tiny temple would be crowded with wild, unbrahminical, candid young Americans.

* * *

Don was a test of Swamiji's tolerance. He had lived in the storefront for months, working little and not trying to change his habits. He had a remarkable speech affectation: instead of talking, he enunciated his words, as if he were reciting them from a book. And he never used contractions. It wasn't that he was intellectual, just that somehow he had developed a plan to abolish his natural dialect. Don's speech struck people as bizarre, like it might be the result of too many drugs. It gave him the air of being not an ordinary being. And he continuously took marijuana, even after Swamiji had asked those who lived with him not to. Sometimes during the day his girl friend would join him in the storefront, and they would sit together talking intimately and sometimes kissing. But he liked the Swami. He even gave some money once. He liked living in the storefront, and Swamiji didn't complain.

But others did. One day an interested newcomer dropped by the storefront and found Don alone, surrounded by the sharp aroma of marijuana. "You been smoking pot? But the Swami doesn't want anyone smoking here." Don denied it: "I have not been smoking. You are not speaking the truth." The boy then reached in Don's shirt pocket and pulled out a joint, and Don hit him in the face. Several of the boys found out. They weren't sure what was right: What would the Swami do? What do you do if someone smokes pot? Even though a devotee was not supposed to, could it be allowed sometimes? They put the matter before Swamiji.

Prabhupāda took it very seriously, and he was upset, especially about the violence. "He hit you?" he asked the boy. "I will go down myself and kick him in the head." But then Prabhupāda thought about it and said that Don should be asked to leave. But Don had already left.

The next morning during Swamiji's class, Don appeared at the front door. From his dais, Swamiji looked out at Don with great concern. But his first concern was for ISKCON: "Ask him," Prabhupāda requested Roy, who sat nearby, "if he has marijuana—then he cannot come in. Our society..." Prabhupāda was like an anxious father, afraid for the life of his infant ISKCON. Roy went to the door and told Don he would have to give up his drugs if he entered. And Don walked away.

Raphael was not interested in spiritual discipline. He was a tall young man with long, straight, brown hair who, like Don, tried to stay aloof and casual toward Swamiji. When Prabhupāda introduced japa and encouraged the boys to chant during the day, Raphael didn't go for it. He said he liked a good kīrtana, but he wouldn't chant on beads.

One time Swamiji was locked out of his apartment, and the boys had to break the lock. Swamiji asked Raphael to replace it. Days went by. Raphael could sit in the storefront reading Rimbaud, he could wander around town, but he couldn't find time to fix the lock. One evening he dropped by the Swami's apartment, opened the lockless door, and made his way to the back room, where some boys were sitting, listening to Swamiji speak informally about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Suddenly Raphael spoke up, expressing his doubts and revealing his distracted mind. "As for me," he said, "I don't know what's happening. I don't know whether a brass band is playing or what the heck is

going on." Some of the devotees tensed; he had interrupted their devotional mood. "Raphael is very candid," Swamiji replied, smiling, as if to explain his son's behavior to the others.

Raphael finally fixed the lock, but one day after a lecture he approached the Swami, stood beside the dais, and spoke up, exasperated, impatient: "I am not meant to sit in a temple and chant on beads! My father was a boxer. I am meant to run on the beach and breathe in big breaths of air..." Raphael went on, gesticulating and voicing his familiar complaints—things he would rather do than take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Suddenly Prabhupāda interrupted him in a loud voice: "Then do it! Do it!" Raphael shrank away, but he stayed.

Bill Epstein took pride in his relationship with the Swami—it was honest. Although he helped the Swami by telling people about him and sending them up to see him in his apartment, he felt the Swami knew he'd never become a serious follower. Nor did Bill ever mislead himself into thinking he would ever be serious. But Prabhupāda wasn't content with Bill's take-it-or-leave-it attitude. When Bill would finally show up at the storefront again after spending some days at a friend's place, only to fall asleep with a blanket wrapped over his head during the lecture, Prabhupāda would just start shouting so loud that Bill couldn't sleep. Sometimes Bill would ask a challenging question, and Prabhupāda would answer and then say, "Are you satisfied?" and Bill would look up dreamily and answer, "No!" Then Prabhupāda would answer it again more fully and say louder, "Are you satisfied?" and again Bill would say no. This would go on until Bill would have to give in: "Yes, yes, I am satisfied."

But Bill was the first person to get up and dance during a kīrtana in the storefront. Some of the other boys thought he looked like he was dancing in an egotistical, narcissistic way, even though his arms were outstretched in a facsimile of the pictures of Lord Caitanya. But when Swamiji saw Bill dancing like that, he looked at Bill with wide-open eyes and feelingly expressed appreciation: "Bill is dancing just like Lord Caitanya."

Bill sometimes returned from his wanderings with money, and although it was not very much, he would give it to Swamiji. He liked to sleep at the storefront and spend the day on the street, returning for lunch or kīrtanas or a place to sleep. He used to leave in the morning and go looking for cigarettes on the ground. To Bill, the Swami was part of the hip movement and had thus earned a place of respect in his eyes as a genuine person. Bill objected when the boys introduced signs of reverential worship toward the Swami (starting with their giving him an elevated seat in the temple), and as the boys who lived with the Swami gradually began to show enthusiasm, competition, and even rivalry among themselves, Bill turned from it in disgust. He allowed that he would go on just helping the Swami in his own way, and he knew that the Swami appreciated whatever he did. So he wanted to leave it at that.

Carl Yeargens had helped Prabhupāda in times of need. He had helped with the legal work of incorporating ISKCON, signed the ISKCON charter as a trustee, and even opened his home to Swamiji when David had driven him from the Bowery loft. But those days when he and Eva had shared their apartment with him had created a tension that had never left. He liked the Swami, he respected him as a genuine sannyāsī from India, but he didn't accept the conclusions of the philosophy. The talk about Kṛṣṇa and the soul was fine, but the idea of giving up drugs and sex was carrying it a little too far. Now Prabhupāda was settled in his new place, and Carl decided that he

had done his part to help and was no longer needed. Although he had helped Prabhupāda incorporate his International Society for Krishna Consciousness, he didn't want to join it.

Carl found the Second Avenue kīrtanas too public, not like the more intimate atmosphere he had enjoyed with the Swami on the Bowery. Now the audiences were larger, and there was an element of wild letting loose that they had never had on the Bowery. Like some of the other old associates, Carl felt sheepish and reluctant to join in. In comparison to the Second Avenue street scene, the old meetings in the fourth-floor Bowery loft had seemed more mystical, like secluded meditations.

Carol Bekar also preferred a more sedate kīrtana. She thought people were trying to take out their personal frustrations by the wild singing and dancing. The few times she did attend evening kīrtanas on Second Avenue were "tense moments." One time a group of teenagers had come into the storefront mocking and shouting, "Hey! What the hell is this!" She kept thinking that at any moment a rock was going to come crashing through the big window. And anyway, her boyfriend wasn't interested.

James Greene felt embarrassed. He saw that most of the new men were making a serious commitment to the Swami, whereas he could not. He had no bad feeling toward the Swami and his new movement, but he preferred to live alone.

Robert Nelson, Prabhupāda's old uptown friend, never deviated in his good feelings for Prabhupāda, but he always went along in his own natural way and never adopted any serious disciplines. Somehow, almost all of those who had helped Prabhupāda uptown and on the Bowery did not want to go further once he began a spiritual organization, which happened almost immediately after he moved into 26 Second Avenue. New people were coming forward to assist him, and Carl, James, Carol, and others like them felt that they were being replaced and that their obligation toward the Swami was ending. It was a kind of changing of the guard. Although the members of the old guard were still his well-wishers, they began to drift away.

* * *

Bruce Scharf had just graduated from New York University and was applying for a job. One day an exroommate told him about the Swami he had visited down on Second Avenue. "They sing there," his friend said, "and they have this far-out thing where they have some dancing. And Allen Ginsberg was there." The Swami was difficult to understand, his friend explained, and besides that, his followers recorded his talks on a tape recorder. "Why should he have a big tape recorder? That's not very spiritual." But Bruce became interested.

He was already a devotee of Indian culture. Four years ago, when he was barely twenty, Bruce had worked during the summer as a steward aboard an American freighter and gone to India, where he had visited temples, bought pictures of Śiva and Gaṇeśa and books on Gandhi, and felt as if he were part of the culture. When he returned to N.Y.U., he read more about India and wrote a paper on Gandhi for his history course. He would eat in Indian restaurants and attend Indian films and music recitals, and he was reading the Bhagavad-gītā. He had even given up eating meat. He had plans of returning to India, taking some advanced college courses, and then coming back to America to teach Eastern religions. But in the meantime he was experimenting with LSD.

Chuck Barnett was eighteen years old. His divorced mother had recently moved to Greenwich Village, where she was studying psychology at N.Y.U. Chuck had moved out of his mother's apartment to one on Twelfth Street on the Lower East Side, in the neighborhood of Allen Ginsberg and other hip poets and musicians. He was a progressive jazz flutist who worked with several professional groups in the city. He had been practicing haṭha-yoga for six years and had recently been experimenting with LSD. He would have visions of lotuses and concentric circles, but after coming down, he would become more involved than ever in sensuality. A close friend of Chuck's had suddenly gone homosexual that summer, leaving Chuck disgusted and cynical. Someone told Chuck that an Indian swami was staying downtown on Second Avenue, and so he came one day in August to the window of the former Matchless Gifts store.

Steve Guarino, the son of a New York fireman, had grown up in the city and graduated from Brooklyn College in 1961. Influenced by his father, he had gone into the Navy, where he had tolerated two years of military routine, always waiting for the day he would be free to join his friends on the Lower East Side. Finally, a few months after the death of President Kennedy, he had been honorably discharged. Without so much as paying a visit to his parents, he had headed straight for the Lower East Side, which by then appeared vividly within his mind to be the most mystical place in the world. He was writing stories and short novels under the literary influence of Franz Kafka and others, and he began to take LSD "to search and experiment with consciousness." A Love Supreme, a record by John Coltrane, the jazz musician, encouraged Steve to think that God actually existed. Just to make enough money to live, Steve had taken a job with the welfare office. One afternoon during his lunch hour, while walking down Second Avenue, he saw that the Matchless Gifts store had a small piece of paper in the window, announcing, "Lectures in Bhagavad Gītā, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami."

Chuck: I finally found Second Avenue and First Street, and I saw through the window that there was some chanting going on inside and some people were sitting up against the wall. Beside me on the sidewalk some middle-class people were looking in and giggling. I turned to them, and with my palms folded I asked, "Is this where a swami is?" They giggled and said, "Pilgrim, your search has ended." I wasn't surprised by this answer, because I felt it was the truth.

Bruce and Chuck, unknown to one another, lived only two blocks apart. After the suggestion from his friend, Bruce also made his way to the storefront.

Bruce: I was looking for Hare Kṛṣṇa. I had left my apartment and had walked over to Avenue B when I decided to walk all the way down to Houston Street. When I came to First Street, I turned right and then, walking along First Street, came to Second Avenue. All along First Street I was seeing these Puerto Rican grocery stores, and then there was one of those churches where everyone was standing up, singing loudly, and playing tambourines. Then, as I walked further along First Street, I had the feeling that I was leaving the world, like when you're going to the airport to catch a plane. I thought, "Now I'm leaving a part of me behind, and I'm going to something new."

But when I got over to Second Avenue, I couldn't find Hare Kṛṣṇa. There was a gas station, and then I walked past a little storefront, but the only sign was one that said Matchless Gifts. Then I walked back again past the store, and in the window I saw a black-and-white sign announcing a

Bhagavad-gītā lecture. I entered the storefront and saw a pile of shoes there, so I took off my shoes and came in and sat down near the back.

Steve: I had a feeling that this was a group that was already established and had been meeting for a while. I came in and sat down on the floor, and a boy who said his name was Roy was very courteous and friendly to me. He seemed to be one who had already experienced the meetings. He asked me my name, and I felt at ease.

Suddenly the Swami entered, coming through the side door. He was wearing a saffron dhotī but no shirt, just a piece of cloth like a long sash, tied in a knot across his right shoulder and leaving his arms, his left shoulder, and part of his chest bare. When I saw him I thought of the Buddha.

Bruce: There were about fifteen people sitting on the floor. One man with a big beard sat up by the front on the right-hand side, leaning up against the wall. After some time the door on the opposite side opened, and in walked the Swami. When he came in, he turned his head to see who was in his audience. And then he stared right at me. Our eyes met. It was as if he were studying me. In my mind it was like a photograph was being taken of Swamiji looking at me for the first time. There was a pause. Then he very gracefully got up on the dais and sat down and took out a pair of hand cymbals and began a kīrtana. The kīrtana was the thing that most affected me. It was the best music I'd ever heard. And it had meaning. You could actually concentrate on it, and it gave you some joy to repeat the words "Hare Kṛṣṇa." I immediately accepted it as a spiritual practice.

Chuck: I entered the storefront, and sitting on a grass mat on the hard floor was a person who seemed at first to be neither male nor female, but when he looked at me I couldn't even look him straight in the eyes, they were so brilliant and glistening. His skin was golden with rosy cheeks, and he had large ears that framed his face. He had three strands of beads—one which was at his neck, one a little longer, and the other down on his chest. He had a long forehead, which rose above his shining eyes, and there were many furrows in his brow. His arms were slender and long. His mouth was rich and full, and very dark and red and smiling, and his teeth were brighter than his eyes. He sat in a cross-legged position that I had never seen before in any yoga book and had never seen any yogī perform. It was a sitting posture, but his right foot was crossed over the thigh and brought back beside his left hip, and one knee rested on the other directly in front of him. His every expression and gesture was different from those of any other personality I had ever seen, and I sensed that they had meanings that I did not know, from a culture and a mood that were completely beyond this world. There was a mole on his side and a peculiar callus on his ankle, a round callus similar to what a karate expert develops on his knuckle. He was dressed in unhemmed cloth, dyed saffron. Everything about him was exotic, and his whole effulgence made him seem to be not even sitting in the room but projected from some other place. He was so brilliant in color that it was like a technicolor movie, and yet he was right there. I heard him speaking. He was sitting right there before me, yet it seemed that if I reached out to touch him he wouldn't be there. At the same time, seeing him was not an abstract or subtle experience but a most intense presence.

After their first visit to the storefront, Chuck, Steve, and Bruce each got an opportunity to see the Swami upstairs in his apartment.

Steve: I was on my lunch hour and had to be back in the office very soon. I was dressed in a summer business suit. I had planned it so that I had just enough time to go to the storefront and buy some books, then go to lunch and return to work. At the storefront, one of the Swami's followers said that I could go up and see the Swami. I went upstairs to his apartment and found him at his sitting place with a few boys. I must have interrupted what he was saying, but I asked him if I could purchase the three volumes of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. One of the devotees produced the books from the closet opposite Prabhupāda's seat. I handled the books—they were a very special color not usually seen in America, a reddish natural earth, like a brick—and I asked him how much they cost. Six dollars each, he said. I took twenty dollars out of my wallet and gave it to him. He seemed the only one to ask about the price of the books or give the money to, because none of the others came forward to represent him. They were just sitting back and listening to him speak.

"These books are commentaries on the scriptures?" I asked, trying to show that I knew something about books. Swamiji said yes, they were his commentaries. Sitting, smiling, at ease, Swamiji was very attractive. He seemed very strong and healthy. When he smiled, all his teeth were beautiful, and his nostrils flared aristocratically. His face was full and powerful. He was wearing an Indian cloth robe, and as he sat cross legged, his smooth-skinned legs were partly exposed. He wore no shirt, but the upper part of his body was wrapped with an Indian cloth shawl. His limbs were quite slender, but he had a protruding belly.

When I saw that Swamiji was having to personally handle the sale of books, I did not want to bother him. I quickly asked him to please keep the change from my twenty dollars. I took the three volumes without any bag or wrapping and was standing, preparing to leave, when Swamiji said, "Sit down," and gestured that I should sit opposite him like the others. He had said "Sit down" in a different tone of voice. It was a heavy tone and indicated that now the sale of the books was completed and I should sit with the others and listen to him speak. He was offering me an important invitation to become like one of the others, who I knew spent many hours with him during the day when I was usually at my job and not able to come. I envied their leisure in being able to learn so much from him and sit and talk intimately with him. By ending the sales transaction and asking me to sit, he assumed that I was in need of listening to him and that I had nothing better in the world to do than to stop everything else and hear him. But I was expected back at the office. I didn't want to argue, but I couldn't possibly stay. "I'm sorry, I have to go," I said definitely. "I'm only on my lunch hour." As I said this, I had already started to move for the door, and Swamiji responded by suddenly breaking into a wide smile and looking very charming and very happy. He seemed to appreciate that I was a working man, a young man on the go. I had not come by simply because I was unemployed and had nowhere to go and nothing to do. Approving of my energetic demeanor, he allowed me to take my leave.

Chuck: One of the devotees in the storefront invited me upstairs to see the Swami in private. I was led out of the storefront into a hallway and suddenly into a beautiful little garden with a picnic table, a birdbath, a birdhouse, and flower beds. After we passed through the garden, we came to a middle-class apartment building. We walked up the stairs and entered an apartment which was absolutely bare of any furniture—just white walls and a parquet floor. He led me through the front room and into another room, and there was the Swami, sitting in that same majestic spiritual

presence on a thin cotton mat, which was covered by a cloth with little elephants printed on it, and leaning back on a pillow which stood against the wall.

One night Bruce walked home with Wally, and he told Wally about his interest in going to India and becoming a professor of Oriental literature. "Why go to India?" Wally asked. "India has come here. Swamiji is teaching us these authentic things. Why go to India?" Bruce thought Wally made sense, so he resolved to give up his long-cherished idea of going to India, at least as long as he could go on visiting the Swami.

Bruce: I decided to go and speak personally to Swamiji, so I went to the storefront. I found out that he lived in an apartment in the rear building. A boy told me the number and said I could just go and speak with the Swami. He said, "Yes, just go." So I walked through the storefront, and there was a little courtyard where some plants were growing. Usually in New York there is no courtyard, nothing green, but this was very attractive. And in that courtyard there was a boy typing at a picnic table, and he looked very spiritual and dedicated. I hurried upstairs and rang the bell for apartment number 2C. After a little while the door opened, and it was the Swami. "Yes," he said. And I said, "I would like to speak with you." He opened the door wider and stepped back and said, "Yes, come." We went inside together into his sitting room and sat down facing each other. He sat behind his metal trunk-desk on a very thin mat which was covered with a woolen blanketlike cover that had frizzled ends and elephants decorating it. He asked me my name and I told him it was Bruce. And then he remarked, "Ah. In India, during the British period, there was one Lord Bruce." And he said something about Lord Bruce being a general and engaging in some campaigns.

I felt that I had to talk to the Swami—to tell him my story—and I actually found him interested to listen. It was very intimate, sitting with him in his apartment, and he was actually wanting to hear about me.

While we were talking, he looked up past me, high up on the wall behind me, and he was talking about Lord Caitanya. The way he looked up, he was obviously looking at some picture or something, but with an expression of deep love in his eyes. I turned around to see what made him look like that. Then I saw the picture in the brown frame: Lord Caitanya dancing in kīrtana.

Inevitably, meeting with Prabhupāda meant a philosophical discussion.

Chuck: I asked him, "Can you teach me rāja-yoga?" "Oh," he said. "Here is Bhagavad-gītā." He handed me a copy of the Gītā. "Turn to the last verse of the Sixth Chapter," he said, "and read." I read the translation out loud. "And of all yogīs, he who is worshiping Me with faith and devotion I consider to be the best." I could not comprehend what "faith" and "devotion" meant, so I said, "Sometimes I'm getting some light in my forehead." "That is hallucination!" he said. So abruptly he said it—although he did not strain his person, the words came at me so intensely that it completely shocked me. "Rāja means 'king'—king yoga," he said, "but this is emperor yoga."

I knew that he had attained such a high state not by using chemicals from a laboratory or by any Western speculative process, and this was certainly what I wanted. "Are you giving classes?" I asked. He said, "Yes, if you come at six in the morning I am giving classes in the Gītā. And bring some flower or fruit for the Deity." I looked into the adjoining room, which was bare with a

wooden parquet floor, bare walls, and a tiny table, and on the table was a picture of five humanlike figures with their arms raised above their heads. Somehow, their arms and faces were not like any mortal that I'd ever seen. I knew that the picture was looking at me.

When I came out on the street in front of the storefront there were a few people standing around, and I said, "I don't think I'm going to take LSD any more." I said it out loud to myself, but some other people heard me.

Steve: I wanted to show my appreciation for spiritual India, so I presented to Swamiji that I had read the autobiography of Gandhi. "It was glorious," I said. "What is glorious about it?" Swamiji challenged.

When he asked this, there were others present in the room. Although I was a guest, he had no qualms about challenging me for having said something foolish. I searched through my remembrances of Gandhi's autobiography to answer his challenging question, "What is glorious?" I began to relate that one time Gandhi, as a child, although raised as a vegetarian, was induced by some of his friends to eat meat, and that night he felt that a lamb was howling in his belly. Swamiji dismissed this at once, saying, "Most of India is vegetarian. That is not glorious." I couldn't think of anything else glorious to say, and Swamiji said, "His autobiography is called *Experiments with Truth*. But that is not the nature of truth. It is not to be found by someone's experimenting. Truth is always truth."

Although it was a blow to my ego, being exposed and defeated by Swamiji seemed to be a gain for me. I wanted to bring before him many different things for his judgment, just to see what he had to say about them. I showed him the paperback edition of the *Bhagavad-gītā* that I was reading and carrying in my back pocket. He perused the back cover. There was a reference to "the eternal faith of the Hindus," and Swamiji began to take the phrase apart. He explained how the word Hindu was a misnomer and does not occur anywhere in the Sanskrit literature itself. He also explained that Hinduism and Hindu beliefs were not eternal.

Bruce: After I talked about my desire for religious life, I began telling him about a conflict I had had with one of my professors in English literature. He was a Freudian, so he would explain the characters in all the novels and so on in a Freudian context and with Freudian terminology. Everything was sexual—the mother for the son, this one for that one, and so on. But I would always see it in terms of a religious essence. I would see it in terms of a religious impulse, or some desire to understand God. I would write my papers in that context, and he would always say, "The religious can also be interpreted as Freudian." So I didn't do very well in the course. I was mentioning this to the Swami, and he said, "Your professor is correct." I was surprised—I am going to an Indian swami, and he is saying that the professor was correct, that everything is based on sex and not religion! This kind of pulled the rug out from under me when he said that. Then he qualified what he'd said. He explained that in the material world everyone is operating on the basis of sex; everything that everyone is doing is being driven by the sex impulse. "So," he said, "Freud is correct. Everything is on the basis of sex." Then he clarified what material life is and what spiritual life is. In spiritual life, there is a complete absence of sex desire. So this had a profound effect on me.

He wasn't confirming my old sentimental ideas, but he was giving me new ideas. He was giving me his instructions, and I had to accept them. Talking to the Swami was very nice. I found him completely natural, and I found him to be very artistic. The way he held his head, the way he enunciated his words—very dignified, very gentlemanly.

The boys found Swamiji not only philosophical, but personal also.

Steve: A few nights later, I went to see the Swami and told him I was reading his book. One thing that had especially caught my attention was a section where the author of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Vyāsadeva, was admitting that he was feeling despondent. Then his spiritual master, Nārada, explained that his despondency had come because although he had written so many books, he had neglected to write in such a way as to fully glorify Kṛṣṇa. After hearing this, Vyāsadeva compiled the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

When I read this, I identified with the fact that Vyāsadeva was a writer, because I considered myself a writer also, and I knew that I was also despondent. "This was very interesting about the author, Vyāsadeva," I said. "He wrote so many books, but still he was not satisfied, because he had not directly praised Kṛṣṇa." Although I had very little understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Swamiji opened his eyes very wide, surprised that I was speaking on such an elevated subject from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He seemed pleased.

Chuck: I had come by in the afternoon, and Swamiji had given me a plate of prasādam. So I was eating, and a chili burned my mouth. Swamiji said, "Is it too hot?" "Yes," I said. So he brought me a tiny teacup with some milk, and then he took some rice off my plate and took a piece of banana and crushed it all up together with his fingers and said, "Here, eat this. It will kill the action of the chilies."

Bruce: There wasn't anything superficial about him, nor was he ever contrived, trying to make some impression. He was just completely himself. In the Swami's room there was no furniture, so we sat on the floor. And I found this to be very attractive and simple. Everything was so authentic about him. Uptown at another swami's place we had sat on big, stuffed living room chairs, and the place had been lavishly furnished. But here was the downtown swami, wearing simple cloth robes. He had no business suit on—he wasn't covering up a business suit with those saffron robes. And he wasn't affected, as the other swami was. So I found myself asking him if I could be his student, and he said yes. I was very happy, because he was so different from the other swami. With the uptown swami I was wanting to become his student because I wanted to get something from him—I wanted to get knowledge. It was selfishly motivated. But here I was actually emotionally involved. I was feeling that I wanted to become the Swami's student. I actually wanted to give myself, because I thought he was great and what he was giving was pure and pristine and wonderful. It was a soothing balm for the horrible city life. Uptown I had felt like a stranger.

On one occasion, our conversation turned to my previous trip to India in 1962, and I began talking about how much it meant to me, how much it moved me. I even mentioned that I had made a girl friend there. So we got to talking about that, and I told him that I had her picture—I was carrying the girl's picture in my wallet. So Swamiji asked to see. I took out the picture, and Swamiji looked at it and made a sour face and said, "Oh, she is not pretty. Girls in India are more beautiful than

that." Hearing that from the Swami just killed any attachment I had for that girl. I felt ashamed that I had an interest in a girl that the Swami did not consider pretty. I don't think I ever looked at the photograph again, and certainly I never gave her another thought.

* * *

Bruce was a newcomer and had only been to one week of meetings at the storefront, so no one had told him that the members of Ananda Ashram, Dr. Mishra's yoga retreat, had invited Swamiji and his followers for a day in the upstate countryside. Bruce had just arrived at the storefront one morning when he heard someone announce, "The Swami is leaving!" And Prabhupāda came out of the building and stepped into a car. In a fit of anxiety, Bruce thought that the Swami was leaving them for good—for India! "No," Howard told him, "we're going to a yoga āśrama in the country." But the other car had already left, and there was no room in Swamiji's car. Just then Steve showed up. He had expected the boys to come by his apartment to pick him up. They both had missed the ride.

Bruce phoned a friend up in the Bronx and convinced him to drive them up to Ananda Ashram. But when they got to Bruce's friend's apartment, the friend had decided he didn't want to go. Finally he lent Bruce his car, and Swamiji's two new followers set out for Ananda Ashram.

By the time they arrived, Prabhupāda and his group were already taking prasādam, sitting around a picnic table beneath the trees. Ananda Ashram was a beautiful place, with sloping hills and lots of trees and sky and green grass and a lake. The two latecomers came walking up to Swamiji, who was seated like the father of a family, at the head of the picnic table. Keith was serving from a big wok onto the individual plates. When Prabhupāda saw his two stragglers, he asked them to sit next to him, and Keith served them. Prabhupāda took Steve's capātī and heaped it up with a mound of sugar, and Steve munched on the bread and sugar, while everyone laughed.

Prabhupāda began talking somehow about lion tamers, and he recalled that once at a fair he had seen a man wrestling with a tiger, rolling over and over with it down a hill. The boys, who rarely heard Swamiji speak anything but philosophy, were surprised. They were delighted—city kids, taken to the country by their guru, and having a good time.

Steve: I was walking with Swamiji across a long, gentle slope. I wanted him to see and approve a picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa I had found in a small book, Nārada-bhakti-sūtra. I had planned to get a color reproduction of it to give to each of his followers. So as we were walking across the grass I showed him the picture and asked him whether it was a nice picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa for reproducing. He looked at the picture, smiled, nodded, and said yes.

Bruce: I walked with Swamiji around the grounds. All the others were doing something else, and Swamiji and myself were walking alone. He was talking about building a temple there.

Prabhupāda walked across the scenic acreage, looking at the distant mountains and forests, and Keith walked beside him. Prabhupāda spoke of how Dr. Mishra had offered him the island in the middle of the āśrama's lake to build a temple on. "What kind of temple were you thinking of?"

Keith asked. "How big?" Prabhupāda smiled and gestured across the horizon. "As big as the whole horizon?" Keith laughed. "Yes," Prabhupāda replied.

A few Ananda Ashram men and women came by. One woman was wearing a sārī. Prabhupāda turned to the other women and said, "A woman who wears a sārī looks very feminine."

It was late afternoon when some of Swamiji's followers gathered by the lake and began talking candidly about Swamiji and speculating about his relation to God and their relation to him.

"Well," said Wally, "Swami never claimed to be God or an incarnation, but he says that he is a servant of God, teaching love of God."

"But he says that the spiritual master is not different from God," said Howard. They stood at the edge of the mirrory calm lake and concluded that it was not necessary to talk about this. The answers would be revealed later. None of them really had much spiritual knowledge, but they wanted their faith to deepen.

Afterward, Keith, Wally, and Howard wandered into the meditation room. There was a seat with a picture of Dr. Mishra, who was away in Europe. But the most remarkable thing was a blinking strobe light. "I feel like I'm in a head shop on St. Mark's Place," said Wally. "What kind of spiritual meditation is this?" Howard asked. A Mishra follower, wearing a white kurtā and white bell-bottoms, replied that their guru had said they could sit and meditate on this light. "Swamiji says you should meditate on Kṛṣṇa," said Keith.

After sunset, everyone gathered in the large room of the main building to watch a slide show. It was a loose collection, mostly of assorted slides of India and the Ananda Ashram. A record by a popular Indian sitarist was playing in the background. Some of the slides were of Viṣṇu temples, and when one slide passed by quickly, Prabhupāda asked, "Let me see that. Can you go back and let me see that temple again?" This happened several times when he recognized familiar temples in India. Later in the show, there were several slides of a girl, one of the members of Dr. Mishra's āśrama, demonstrating Indian dance poses. As one of her pictures passed, an āśrama man joked, "Turn back and let me see that temple again." The joke seemed at Swamiji's expense and in poor taste. His followers didn't laugh.

Then came Swamiji's lecture. He sat up cross-legged on the couch in the largest room in the mansion. The room was filled with people—the Swami's followers from the Lower East Side as well as the Ananda Ashram yogīs—sitting on the floor or standing along the walls and in the doorway. He began his talk by criticizing democracy. He said that because people are attached to sense gratification, they vote for a leader who will fulfill their own lust and greed—and that is their only criterion for picking a leader. He went on for forty-five minutes to explain about the importance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, his reel-to-reel tape recorder moving silently.

Then he led a kīrtana that bridged all differences and brought out the best in everyone that night. Several nights before, in his apartment on Second Avenue, Prabhupāda had taught his followers how to dance. They had formed a line behind him while he demonstrated the simple step. Holding his arms above his head, he would first swing his left foot forward across the right foot, and then

bring it back again in a sweeping motion. Then he would swing his right foot over the left and bring it back again. With his arms upraised, Prabhupāda would walk forward, swinging his body from side to side, left foot to right side, right foot to left side, in time with the one-two-three rhythm. He had shown them the step in regular time and in a slow, half-time rhythm. Keith had called it “the Swami step,” as if it were a new ballroom dance.

Prabhupāda's followers began dancing, and soon the others joined them, moving around the room in a rhythmic circle of ecstasy, dancing, swaying, sometimes leaping and whirling. It was a joyous hour-long kīrtana, the Swami encouraging everyone to the fullest extent. A visitor to the āśrama happened to have his stringed bass with him, and he began expertly turning out his own swinging bass improvisations beneath the Swami's melody, while another man played the tablās.

The Ananda Ashram members had been divided of late into two tense, standoffish groups. There was the elderly crowd, similar to the old ladies who had attended the Swami's uptown lectures, and there was the young crowd, mostly hip couples. But in the kīrtana their rifts were forgotten and, as they discovered later, even healed. Whether they liked it or not, almost all of those present were induced to rise and dance.

Then it was late. The Swami took rest in the guest room, and his boys slept outside in their sleeping bags.

Howard: I awaken three or four times, and each time I am flat on my back looking up at the stars, which are always in different positions. My sense of time is confused. The sidereal shifts dizzy me. Then, just before morning, I dream. I dream of devotees clustered about a beautiful golden youth. To see him is to be captivated. His transcendental body radiates an absolute beauty unseen in the world. Stunned, I inquire, “Who is he?” “Don't you know?” someone says. “That's the Swami.” I look carefully, but see no resemblance. The youth appears around eighteen, straight out of Vaikuṇṭha [the spiritual world]. “If that's Swamiji,” I wonder to myself, “why doesn't he come to earth like that?” A voice somewhere inside me answers: “People would follow me for my beauty, not for my teachings.” And I awake, startled. The dream is clear in my mind—more like a vision than a dream. I feel strangely refreshed, bathed in some unknown balm. Again I see that the constellations have shifted and that the dimmer stars have faded into the encroaching dawn. I remember Swamiji telling me that although most dreams are simply functions of the mind, dreams of the spiritual master are of spiritual significance.

Keith also had a dream that night.

Keith: I saw Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Arjuna was inquiring from Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa was reciting the Bhagavad-gītā to him. Then that picture phased out, and the images changed. And there was Swamiji, and I was kneeling in front of him, and the same dialogue was going on. I had the understanding that now is the time, and Swamiji is presenting the same thing as Kṛṣṇa, and we are all in the position of Arjuna. The dream made it very clear that hearing from Swamiji was as good as hearing from Kṛṣṇa.

The sun rose over the mountains, streaking the morning sky above the lake with colors. Wally and Keith were walking around the grounds saying to Prabhupāda how beautiful it all was. “We are not

so concerned with beautiful scenery," said Prabhupāda. "We are concerned with the beautiful one who has made the beautiful scenery."

Later... Prabhupāda sat next to Bruce in the Volkswagen returning to the city. The car went winding around on a ribbon of smooth black mountain road, with lush green forests close in and intermittent vistas of mountains and expansive sky. It was a rare occasion for Bruce to be driving Prabhupāda in a car, because none of the Swami's boys had cars. They would always travel by bus or subway. It seemed fitting for the Swami to have a car to ride in, but this was only a little Volkswagen, and Bruce winced whenever they hit a bump and it jostled Prabhupāda. As they wound their way on through the mountains, Bruce recalled something he had read in a book by Aldous Huxley's wife about the best places for meditation. One opinion had been that the best place to meditate was by a large body of water, because of the negative ions in the air, and the other opinion was that it was better to meditate in the mountains, because you are higher up and closer to God. "Is it better for spiritual realization to meditate in the mountains?" Bruce asked. Prabhupāda replied, "This is nonsense. There is no question of 'better place.' Are you thinking that God is up on some planet or something and you have to go up high? No. You can meditate anywhere. Just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

After some time the drive became tiring for Prabhupāda, and he dozed, his head resting forward.

Bruce walked with Swamiji up to his apartment, opening the door for him, adjusting the window as he liked it, and preparing things in his room, as if he were the Swami's personal servant. Prabhupāda settled back into his Second Avenue apartment, feeling pleased with the visit to Ananda Ashram. The kīrtana had been successful, and one of Dr. Mishra's foremost students had commented that he was impressed by Prabhupāda's followers: simply by chanting they seemed to be achieving an advanced level of yoga discipline, whereas "we have more difficulty with all our postures and breath control."

* * *

The United States' recently increased involvement in Vietnam was creating an increase of opposition to the war. On July 29, American planes had bombed North Vietnam's two major population centers, Hanoi and Haiphong—an escalation which brought expressions of regret from several allied countries, including Canada, France, and Japan. United Nations Secretary General U Thant openly criticized America's policy in Vietnam. Further opposition to the war ranged from the U.S. Senate down to newly formed pacifist groups, and dissenters held peace marches, sit-ins, and rallies in protest of the war and draft.

Religious protest was led by Pope Paul VI. And the World Council of Churches decried America's involvement in Vietnam and called for a halt in the fighting as "the most effective step" toward negotiation. On August 6 (the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima) there were demonstrations in many major American cities, including a peace vigil at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

On August 31, there would be another two-week-long peace vigil before the United Nations General Assembly Building, and Mr. Larry Bogart had invited Prabhupāda and his followers to open

the vigil of "praying for peace." Larry Bogart, who worked at the United Nations Headquarters, had become friends with the Swami and had volunteered his help by arranging to print stationery for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. The letterhead was designed by James Greene with a sketch of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and Mr. Bogart's name also appeared on the stationery at the head of the list of ISKCON trustees.

Prabhupāda accepted Mr. Bogart's invitation to the peace vigil. Prabhupāda saw it as an opportunity to publicly chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, so he was glad to attend. He announced to his congregation that Monday the thirty-first, instead of the usual morning class at 6:30, everyone should meet at the United Nations Headquarters for a special kirtana.

August 31

Some met at the storefront and went by bus, carrying karatālas, a tambourine, and the Swami's bongo. Swamiji rode with a few of his followers in a taxi. The typical dress of his followers consisted of well-worn sneakers, black pants or blue jeans, and T-shirts or button-down sport shirts. Traveling uptown in the early morning put the boys in a lighthearted spirit, and when they saw Swamiji at the U.N. in his flowing saffron robes they became inspired. Swamiji began the chanting, but right away the peace vigil organizers stepped in and asked him to stop. This was a "silent vigil," they said, and it should have prayerful, nonviolent silence. The boys were crushed, but Swamiji accepted the restriction and began silently chanting on his beads.

A dignitary stood up before the assembly and made a short speech in which he mentioned Gandhi, and then he turned to Prabhupāda and indicated that he could now speak about peace. Standing erectly, the U.N. skyscraper looming behind him, Swamiji spoke in a soft voice. The world must accept that God is the proprietor of everything and the friend of everyone, he said. Only then can we have real peace. Mr. Bogart had scheduled the Swami for two hours of silent prayer. Prabhupāda had the devotees sit together and softly chant japa until their two scheduled hours were up. Then they left.

As Prabhupāda rode back downtown in the heavy morning traffic, he said New York reminded him of Calcutta. Amid the start-and-stop motion and noise of the traffic he explained, "We have nothing to do with peace vigils. We simply want to spread this chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, that's all. If people take to this chanting, peace will automatically come. Then they won't have to artificially try for peace."

September 1

The New York Post ran a picture of Swamiji's group at the United Nations Building. Steve brought the clipping in to Prabhupāda: "Swamiji, look. They have referred to you here as 'Sami Krishna'!"

Prabhupāda: "'Sami Krishna'? That's all right."

In the picture, some of the boys were sitting with their heads resting on their arms. "Where are you?" Prabhupāda asked. Steve pointed. "Oh, you chant like this, with your head down?"

Prabhupāda had participated in the peace vigil to oblige his contact, Mr. Bogart. Now Mr. Bogart was phoning to offer his appreciation and agreeing to visit the storefront. He wanted to help, and he would discuss how the Swami could work with the U.N. and how he could solicit help from important people for his movement of Indian culture and peace.

Prabhupāda regarded Mr. Bogart's imminent visit as very important, and he wanted to cook for him personally and receive him in his apartment with the best hospitality. When the day arrived, Prabhupāda and Keith cooked together in the small kitchen for several hours, making the best Indian delicacies. Prabhupāda posted Stanley downstairs and told him not to allow anyone to come up while he was cooking the feast for Mr. Bogart. Stanley assented, blinking his eyes with his far-off "saintly" look.

Stanley stationed himself downstairs in the storefront. A few of the boys were there, and he told them, "You can't go up to see the Swami—no one can." About twelve noon, Larry Bogart arrived, pale, elderly, and well dressed, by Lower East Side standards. He said he wanted to see Swami Bhaktivedanta. "Sorry," Stanley informed him, his boyish face trying to impress the stranger with the seriousness of the order, "the Swami is busy now, and he said no one can see him." Mr. Bogart decided he would wait. There was no chair in the storefront, but Stanley brought him a folding chair. It was a hot day. Mr. Bogart looked at his watch several times. A half hour passed. Stanley sat chanting and sometimes staring off blankly. After an hour, Mr. Bogart asked if he could see the Swami now. Stanley assured him that he could not, and Mr. Bogart left in a huff.

Upstairs, Swamiji had become anxious, wondering why Mr. Bogart had not arrived. Finally, he sent Keith downstairs, and Stanley told him about the man whom he had turned away. "What?" Keith exploded. "But that was..."

Within moments, Swamiji heard what had happened. He became furious. He came down to the storefront: "You fool! You silly fool!" He turned and angrily rebuked everyone in the room, but mostly Stanley. No one had ever seen the Swami so angry. Then Swamiji walked away in disgust and returned to his apartment.

Stanley had been going off the deep end for some time, and now he became even more abstracted in his behavior. Stanley's mother knew her son had been troubled for years, and she had therefore requested Prabhupāda to keep a very close watch on him. But now the boy deteriorated in his responsibilities and stopped cleaning the kitchen and storefront. He would stand alone looking at something. He was gloomy and sometimes spoke of suicide. And he stopped chanting regularly. The boys didn't know what to do, but they thought perhaps he should be sent home to his mother.

One day, Stanley went up to see the Swami. He came in and sat down.

Prabhupāda: "Yes?"

Stanley: "May I have fifty dollars?"

Prabhupāda: "Why?"

Prabhupāda used to handle all the money himself, so when his boys needed something, even if it were only twenty-five cents for the bus, they had to see Swami. He was never wasteful. He was so frugal that whenever he received a letter, he would carefully tear the envelope apart and use the reverse side as writing paper. So he wanted to know why Stanley wanted fifty dollars. Stanley replied in a small voice, "I want to purchase some gasoline and set myself on fire." Prabhupāda saw Chuck at the doorway and told him to call Bruce at once. Bruce quickly came up and sat with Prabhupāda and Stanley. Prabhupāda told Bruce—whom he had recently appointed to handle petty cash—to give Stanley fifty dollars, and he had Stanley repeat why he wanted the money.

"But Swamiji," Bruce protested, "we don't have that much money."

"There, you see, Stanley," Prabhupāda spoke very calmly. "Bruce says we don't have the money." Then they phoned Stanley's mother. Later Prabhupāda said that because Stanley had asked for fifty dollars for gasoline, which cost only thirty-five cents, he could therefore understand Stanley was crazy.

* * *

Keith was cooking lunch in the kitchen as usual, but today Swamiji was standing by the kitchen stove, watching his pupil. Keith paused and looked up from his cooking: "Swamiji, could I become your disciple?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "Why not? Your name will be Kṛṣṇa dāsa."

This simple exchange was the first request for discipleship and Prabhupāda's first granting of initiation. But there was more to it than that. Prabhupāda announced that he would soon hold an initiation. "What's initiation, Swamiji?" one of the boys asked, and Prabhupāda replied, "I will tell you later."

First they had to have beads. Keith went to Tandy's Leather Company and bought half-inch wooden beads and cord to string them on. It was much better, Swamiji said, to count on beads while chanting—a strand of 108 beads, to be exact. This employed the sense of touch, and like the Vaiṣṇavas of India one could count how many times one chanted the mantra. Some devotees in India had a string of more than a thousand beads, he had said, and they would chant through them again and again. He taught the boys how to tie a double knot between each of the 108 beads. The number 108 had a special significance: there were 108 Upaniṣads, as well as 108 principal gopīs, the chief devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The initiates would be taking vows, he said, and one vow would be to chant a prescribed number of rounds on the beads each day. About a dozen of Swamiji's boys were eligible, but there was no strict system for their selection: if they wanted to, they could do it.

Steve: Although I was already doing whatever Swamiji recommended, I sensed that initiation was a heavy commitment. And with my last strong impulses to remain completely independent, I hesitated to take initiation.

Prabhupāda's friends saw the initiation in different ways. Some saw it as very serious, and some took it to be like a party or a happening. While stringing their beads in the courtyard, Wally and Howard talked a few days before the ceremony.

Wally: It's just a formality. You accept Swamiji as your spiritual master.

Howard: What does that entail?

Wally: Nobody's very sure. In India it's a standard practice. Don't you think you want to take him as a spiritual master?

Howard: I don't know. He would seem to be a good spiritual master—whatever that is. I mean, I like him and his teachings a lot, so I guess in a way he's already my spiritual master. I just don't understand how it would change the situation.

Wally: Neither do I. I guess it doesn't. It's just a formality.

* * *

September 8

Janmāṣṭamī day, the appearance day of Lord Kṛṣṇa. One year before, Prabhupāda had observed Kṛṣṇa's birthday at sea aboard the Jaladuta, just out of Colombo. Now, exactly one year later, he had a small crew of Hare Kṛṣṇa chanters. He would gather them all together, have them observe a day of chanting, reading scripture, fasting, and feasting—and the next day would be initiation.

At six o'clock, Prabhupāda came down and was about to give his morning class as usual, when one of the boys asked if he would read from his own manuscript. Prabhupāda appeared shy, yet he did not hide his pleasure at having been asked to read his own Bhagavad-gītā commentary. Usually he would read a verse from Dr. Radhakrishnan's Oxford edition of the Gītā. Although the commentary presented impersonalist philosophy, the translations, Prabhupāda said, were ninety-percent accurate. But this morning he sent Roy up to fetch his manuscript, and for an hour he read from its typewritten pages.

For observing Janmāṣṭamī there were special rules: there should be no eating, and the day was to be spent chanting, reading, and discussing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If anyone became too weak, he said, there was fruit in the kitchen. But better that they fast until the feast at midnight, just like the devotees in India. He said that in India, millions of people—Hindus, Muslims, or whatever—observed the birthday of Lord Kṛṣṇa. And in every temple there were festivities and celebrations of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa.

"And now," he said at length, "I will tell you what is meant by initiation. Initiation means that the spiritual master accepts the student and agrees to take charge, and the student accepts the spiritual master and agrees to worship him as God." He paused. No one spoke. "Any questions?" And when there were none, he got up and walked out.

The devotees were stunned. What had they just heard him say? For weeks he had stressed that when anyone claims to be God he should be considered a dog.

"My mind's just been blown," said Wally.

"Everybody's mind is blown," said Howard. "Swamiji just dropped a bomb."

They thought of Keith. He was wise. Consult Keith. But Keith was in the hospital. Talking among themselves, they became more and more confused. Swamiji's remark had confounded their judgment. Finally, Wally decided to go to the hospital to see Keith.

Keith listened to the whole story: how Swamiji had told them to fast and how he had read from his manuscript and how he had said he would explain initiation and how everybody had leaned forward, all ears... and Swamiji had dropped a bomb: "The student accepts the spiritual master and agrees to worship him as God." "Any questions?" Swamiji had asked softly. And then he had walked out. "I don't know if we want to be initiated now," Wally confessed. "We have to worship him as God."

"Well, you're already doing that by accepting whatever he tells you," Keith replied, and he advised that they talk it over with Swamiji... before the initiation. So Wally went back to the temple and consulted Howard, and together they went up to Swamiji's apartment. "Does what you told us this morning," Howard asked, "mean we are supposed to accept the spiritual master to be God?"

"That means he is due the same respect as God, being God's representative," Prabhupāda replied, calmly.

"Then he is not God?"

"No," Prabhupāda said, "God is God. The spiritual master is His representative. Therefore, he is as good as God because he can deliver God to the sincere disciple. Is that clear?" It was.

It was a mental and physical strain to go all day without eating. Jan was restless. She complained that she couldn't possibly stay any longer but had to go take care of her cat. Prabhupāda tried to overrule her, but she left anyway.

Most of the prospective initiates spent several hours that day stringing their shiny red wooden beads. Having tied one end of the string to a window bar or a radiator, they would slide one bead at a time up the string and knot it tightly, chanting one mantra of Hare Kṛṣṇa for each bead. It was devotional service—chanting and stringing your beads for initiation. Every time they knotted another bead it seemed like a momentous event. Prabhupāda said that devotees in India chanted at least sixty-four rounds of beads a day. Saying the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra once on each of the 108 beads constituted one round. His spiritual master had said that anyone who didn't chant sixty-four rounds a day was fallen. At first some of the boys thought that they would also have to chant sixty-four rounds, and they became perplexed: that would take all day! How could you go to a job if you had to chant sixty-four rounds? How could anyone chant sixty-four rounds? Then someone said Swamiji had told him that thirty-two rounds a day would be a sufficient minimum for the West.

Wally said he had heard Swamiji say twenty-five—but even that seemed impossible. Then Prabhupāda offered the rock-bottom minimum: sixteen rounds a day, without fail. Whoever got initiated would have to promise.

The bead-stringing, chanting, reading, and dozing went on until eleven at night, when everyone was invited up to Swamiji's room. As they filed through the courtyard, they sensed an unusual calm in the atmosphere, and Houston Street, just over the wall, was quiet. There was no moon.

As his followers sat on the floor, contentedly eating prasādam from paper plates, Swamiji sat among them, telling stories about the birth of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa had appeared on this evening five thousand years ago. He was born the son of Vasudeva and Devakī in the prison of King Kāṁsa at midnight, and His father, Vasudeva, immediately took Him to Vṛndāvana, where He was raised as the son of Nanda Mahārāja, a cowherd man.

Prabhupāda also spoke of the necessity of purification for spiritual advancement. "It is not enough merely to chant holy words," he said. "One must be pure inside and out. Chanting in purity brings spiritual advancement. The living entity becomes impure because he wants to enjoy material pleasure. But the impure can become pure by following Kṛṣṇa, by doing all works for Kṛṣṇa. Beginners in Kṛṣṇa consciousness have a tendency to relax their efforts in a short time, but to advance spiritually you must resist this temptation and continually increase your efforts and devotion."

* * *

Michael Grant: I first heard about the initiation just one day before it was to take place. I had been busy with my music and hadn't been attending. I was walking down Second Avenue with one of the prospective initiates, and he mentioned to me that there was going to be something called an initiation ceremony. I asked what it was about, and he said, "All I know is it means that you accept the spiritual master as God." This was a big surprise to me, and I hardly knew how to take it. But I didn't take it completely seriously, and the way it was mentioned to me in such an offhand way made it seem not very important. He asked me very casually whether I was going to be involved, and I, also being very casual about it, said, "Well, I think I will. Why not? I'll give it a try."

Jan didn't think she would make an obedient disciple, and initiation sounded frightening. She liked the Swami, especially cooking with him. But it was Mike who convinced her—he was going, so she should come along with him.

Carl Yeagens knew something about initiation from his readings, and he, more than the others, knew what a serious commitment it was. He was surprised to hear that Swamiji was offering initiation, and he was cautious about entering into it. He knew that initiation meant no illicit sex, intoxication, or meat-eating, and an initiated disciple would have new responsibilities for spreading the teachings to others. Carl was already feeling less involved since the Swami had moved to Second Avenue, but he decided to attend the initiation anyway.

Bill Epstein had never professed to be a serious disciple. Holding initiation was just another part of the Swami's scene, and you were free to take it seriously or not. He figured it was all right to take initiation, even if you weren't serious. He would try it.

Carol Bekar was surprised to hear that some people would be taking initiation even though they had no intentions of giving up their bad habits. She had stopped coming around regularly ever since the Swami had moved, and she felt no desire to ask for initiation. The Swami probably wouldn't initiate women anyway, she figured.

Robert Nelson hadn't forgotten the Swami and always liked to help whenever he could. But except for an occasional friendly visit, he had stopped coming. He mostly stayed to himself. He still lived uptown and wasn't into the Lower East Side scene.

James Greene thought he wasn't pure enough to be initiated: "Who am I to be initiated?" But the Swami had asked him to bring something over to the storefront. "I came, and it was just understood that I was supposed to be initiated. So, I thought, why not?"

Stanley had been chanting regularly again and had come out of his crazy mood. He was sticking with the Swami and his followers. He asked his mother if he could be initiated, and she said it would be all right.

Steve wanted more time to think about it.

Keith was in the hospital.

Bruce had only been attending for a week or two, and it was too soon.

Chuck was on a week's vacation from the regulated spiritual life at the temple, so he didn't know about the initiation.

No one was asked to shave his head or even cut his hair or change his dress. No one offered Prabhupāda the traditional guru-dakṣiṇā, the donation a disciple is supposed to offer as a gesture of his great obligation to his master. Hardly anyone even relieved him of his chores, so Swamiji himself had to do most of the cooking and other preparations for the initiation. He was perfectly aware of the mentality of his boys, and he didn't try to force anything on anyone. Some of the initiates didn't know until after the initiation, when they had inquired, that the four rules—no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, and no gambling—were mandatory for all disciples. Prabhupāda's reply then was, "I am very glad that you are finally asking me that."

It was to be a live Vedic sacrifice, with a ceremonial fire right there in the front room of Swamiji's apartment. In the center of the room was the sacrificial arena, a platform of bricks, four inches high and two feet square, covered with a mound of dirt. The dirt was from the courtyard and the bricks were from a nearby gutted building. Around the mound were eleven bananas, clarified butter, sesame seeds, whole barley grains, five colors of powdered dyes, and a supply of kindling. The eleven initiates took up most of the remaining space in the front room as they sat on the floor knee to knee around the sacrificial arena. The guests in the hallway peered curiously through the open

door. For everyone except the Swami, this was all new and strange, and every step of the ceremony took place under his direction. When some of the boys had made a mess of trying to apply the Vaiṣṇava tilaka to their foreheads, Prabhupāda had patiently guided his finger up their foreheads, making a neat, narrow “V.”

He sat before the mound of earth, looking out at his congregation. They appeared not much different from any other group of young hippies from the Lower East Side who might have assembled at any number of happenings—spiritual, cultural, musical, or whatever. Some were just checking out a new scene. Some were deeply devoted to the Swami. But everyone was curious. He had requested them to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra softly throughout the ceremony, and the chanting had now become a continual drone, accompanying his mysterious movements as head priest of the Vedic rite.

He began by lighting a dozen sticks of incense. Then he performed purification with water. Taking a spoon in his left hand, he put three drops of water from a goblet into his right and sipped the water. He repeated the procedure three times. The fourth time he did not sip but flicked the water onto the floor behind him. He then passed the spoon and goblet around for the initiates, who tried to copy what they had seen. When some of them placed the water in the wrong hand or sipped in the wrong way, Swamiji patiently corrected them.

“Now,” he said, “repeat after me.” And he had them repeat, one word at a time, a Vedic mantra of purification:

om apavitraḥ pavitro vā

sarvāvasthām gato 'pi vā

yaḥ smaret puṇḍarikākṣam

sa bāhyābhyantaraḥ śuciḥ

śrī-viṣṇuḥ śrī-viṣṇuḥ śrī-viṣṇuḥ

The initiates tried falteringly to follow his pronunciation of the words, which they had never heard before. Then he gave the translation: “Unpurified or purified, or even having passed through all situations, one who remembers the lotus-eyed Supreme Personality of Godhead is cleansed within and without.” Three times he repeated the sipping of water, the drone of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra filling the room as the goblet passed from initiate to initiate and back again to him, and three times he led the chanting of the mantra: om apavitraḥ... Then he raised a hand, and as the buzzing of the chanting trailed off into silence, he began his lecture.

After the lecture, he asked the devotees one by one to hand him their beads, and he began chanting on them—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The sound of everyone chanting filled the room. After finishing one strand, he would summon the owner of the beads and hold the beads up while demonstrating how to chant. Then he

would announce the initiate's spiritual name, and the disciple would take back the beads, bow to the floor, and recite:

nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale

śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa, having taken shelter at His lotus feet." There were eleven initiates and so eleven sets of beads, and the chanting lasted for over an hour. Prabhupāda gave each boy a strand of neck beads, which he said were like dog collars, identifying the devotee as Kṛṣṇa's dog.

After Wally received his beads and his new name (Umāpati), he returned to his place beside Howard and said, "That was wonderful. Getting your beads is wonderful." In turn, each initiate received his beads and his spiritual name. Howard became Hayagrīva, Wally became Umāpati, Bill became Ravindra Svarūpa, Carl became Karlāpati, James became Jagannātha, Mike became Mukunda, Jan became Janakī, Roy became Rāya Rāma, and Stanley became Stryadhīśa. Another Stanley, a Brooklyn boy with a job, and Janis, a college student from Montreal, both of whom had rather peripheral relationships with the Swami, appeared that night and took initiation with the rest—receiving the names Satyavrata and Janārdana.

Then Swamiji began the fire sacrifice by sprinkling the colored dyes across the mound of earth before him. With fixed attention his congregation watched each mysterious move, as he picked up the twigs and wooden splinters, dipped them into clarified butter, lit them in a candle flame, and built a small fire in the center of the mound. He mixed sesame seeds, barley, and clarified butter in a bowl and then passed the mixture around. Each new disciple took a handful of the mixture to offer into the fire. He then began to recite Sanskrit prayers, asking everyone please to repeat them, each prayer ending with the responsive chanting of the word "svāhā" three times. And with svāhā the initiates would toss some of the sesame-barley mixture into the fire. Swamiji kept pouring butter, piling up wood, and chanting more prayers, until the mound was blazing. The prayers kept coming and the butter kept pouring and the fire got larger and the room got hotter.

After fifteen or twenty minutes, he asked each of the initiates to place a banana in the fire. With eleven bananas heaped on the fire, the flames began to die, and the smoke thickened. A few of the initiates got up and ran coughing into the other room, and the guests retreated into the hallway. But Swamiji went on pouring the remaining butter and seeds into the fire. "This kind of smoke does not disturb," he said. "Other smoke disturbs, but this kind of smoke does not." Even though everyone's eyes were watering with irritation, he asked that the windows remain closed. So most of the smoke was contained within the apartment, and no neighbors complained.

Swamiji smiled broadly, rose from his seat before the sacrificial fire, the blazing tongue of Viṣṇu, and began clapping his hands and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Placing one foot before the other and swaying from side to side, he began to dance before the fire. His disciples joined him in dancing and chanting, and the smoke abated. He had each disciple touch his beads to the feet of Lord Caitanya in the Pañca-tattva picture on the table, and finally he allowed the windows opened. As

the ceremony was finished and the air in the apartment was clearing, Swamiji began to laugh: "There was so much smoke I thought they might have to call the fire brigade."

Prabhupāda was happy. He arranged that prasādam be distributed to all the devotees and guests. The fire, the prayers, the vows, and everyone chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa had all created an auspicious atmosphere. Things were going forward. Now there were initiated devotees in the Western world. Finally most of the disciples went home to their apartments, leaving their spiritual master to clean up after the initiation ceremony.

* * *

September 10

The morning after the initiation, Prabhupāda sat in his apartment reading from a commentary on the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The large Sanskrit volume lay before him on his desk as he read. He wore horn-rimmed glasses, which changed his demeanor, making him look extremely scholarly. He wore eyeglasses only for reading, and this added to the visual impression that he had now gone into a deep professorial meditation. The room was quiet, and brilliant midmorning sunlight shone warmly through the window.

Suddenly someone knocked on the door. "Yes? Come in." He looked up, removing his glasses, as Mike and Jan, now Mukunda and Janakī, opened the door, peering in. He had asked to see them. "Yes, yes, come in." He smiled, and they walked in and closed the door behind them, two vivacious young Americans. From his expressive eyes, he seemed to be amused. They sat down before him, and Prabhupāda playfully addressed them by their new initiated names. "So, you are living together, but now you have taken serious vows of initiation. So what will you do about it?"

"Well"—Mukunda seemed puzzled—"isn't there any love in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

Swamiji nodded. "Yes, so I am saying why don't you get married?"

They agreed it was a good idea, and Prabhupāda immediately scheduled a wedding date for two days later.

Swamiji said he would cook a big feast and hold the marriage ceremony in his apartment, and he asked Mukunda and Janakī to invite their relatives. Both Mukunda and Janakī had grown up in Oregon, and their family members found it impossible to travel such a long distance on such short notice. Only Janakī's sister, Joan, agreed to come.

Joan: Little did I know what kind of wedding it would be. All I knew was that they had met a swami and were taking Sanskrit from him as well as attending his small storefront temple on Second Avenue. When I met the Swami he was sitting beside the window in his front room, bathed in sunlight, surrounded by pots of prasādam, which he was distributing to the devotees who were sitting around him against the wall. I was a follower of macrobiotics and not so eager for taking this noonday meal. When I entered the room, the Swami said, "Who is this?" and Mukunda said, "This is Janakī's sister, Joan. She has come from Oregon to attend the wedding." Swamiji said, "Oh?

Where is Oregon?" Mukunda said, "It's three thousand miles away, on the other side of the United States." And he asked, "Oh, coming from so far? Very nice. And when will the other members of the family arrive?" Then I said, "I am the only one who is coming for the wedding, Swamiji." He said, "Never mind. It is very nice that you have come. Please sit down and take some kṛṣṇa-prasādam."

He offered me some dāl, a rather moist sabji, yogurt, salad, and capātīs. But because I was a devotee of macrobiotics, all of this prasādam was very unpalatable to me. Practically speaking, it was sticking in my throat the whole time, but I remember looking over at the radiant and beautiful person who was so eager for me to take this prasādam that he had prepared. So I took it all, but in my mind I decided this would be the last time I would take this luncheon with the devotees.

At any rate, somehow I finished the meal, and Swamiji, who had been looking over at me, said, "You want more? You want more?" And I said, "No, thank you. I am so full. It was very nice, but I can't take any more." So finally the prasādam was finished, and they were all getting up to clean, and Swamiji commented that he wanted to see Mukunda, Janakī, and myself—for making preparations for the wedding the next day.

So when we were all there sitting in the room with him, the Swami reached over into the corner, where there was a big pot with crystallized sugar syrup sticking to the outside. I thought, "Oh, this is supposed to be the pi«ce de resistance, but I can't possibly take any more." But he reached his hand into the pot anyway and pulled up a huge, round, dripping gulābjāmun. I said, "Oh, no. I am so full I couldn't take any." And he said, "Oh, take, take." And he made me hold out my hand and take it. Well, by the time I finished the gulābjāmun I was fully convinced that this would be the last time I would ever come there.

Then he began explaining how in the Vedic tradition the woman's side of the family made lavish arrangements for the wedding. And since I was the only member of the family who had come to assist, I should come the next day and help him make the wedding feast. So the next morning at nine, while Janakī was decorating the room for the fire sacrifice, stringing leaves and flower garlands across the top of the room, I went upstairs to meet Swamiji.

When I arrived, he immediately sent me out shopping with a list—five or six items to purchase. One of those items was not available anywhere in the markets, although I spoke to so many shopkeepers. When I came back he asked me, "You have obtained all the items on the list?" And I said, "Well, everything except for one." He said, "What is that?" I said, "Well, no one knows what tumar is."

He had me wash my hands and sat me down in his front room on the floor with a five-pound bag of flour, a pound of butter, and a pitcher of water. And he looked down at me and said, "Can you make a medium soft dough?" I replied, "Do you mean a pastry or piecrust or shortcrust dough or pate brisee dough? What kind of pastry do you want?" "How old are you?" he said. And I said, "I am twenty-five, Swamiji." "You are twenty-five," he said, "and you can't make a medium-soft dough? It is a custom in India that any young girl from the age of five years is very experienced in making this dough. But never mind, I will show you." So he very deftly emptied the bag of flour and, with his fingertips, cut in the butter until the mixture had a consistency of coarse meal. Then

he made a well in the center of the flour, poured in just the right amount of water, and very deftly and expertly kneaded it into a velvety smooth, medium soft dough. He then brought in a tray of cooked potatoes, mashed them with his fingertips, and began to sprinkle in spices. He showed me how to make and form potato kacaurīs, which are fried Indian pastries with spiced potato filling. From eleven until five that afternoon, I sat in this one room, making potato kacaurīs. Meanwhile, in the course of the same afternoon, Swamiji brought in fifteen other special vegetarian dishes, each one in a large enough quantity for forty persons. And he had made them singlehandedly in his small, narrow kitchen.

It was rather hot that afternoon, and I was perspiring. I asked, "Swamiji, may I please have a glass of water?" He peeked his head around the door, and said, "Go wash your hands." I immediately did so, and when I returned Swamiji had a glass of water for me. He explained to me that while preparing this food for offering to the Supreme Lord, one should not think of eating or drinking anything. So after drinking the glass of water, I went in and washed my hands and sat down. About two in the afternoon, I said, "Swamiji, may I have a cigarette?" and he peeked his head around the corner and said, "Go wash your hands." So I did, and when I came back he explained to me the four rules of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I continued to make the kacaurīs, and around three-thirty, four o'clock, it was extremely warm in the room, and as Swamiji was bringing in one of his preparations I was wiping my arm and hand across my forehead. He looked down at me and said, "Please go and wash your hands." Again I did so, and upon returning he had a moistened paper towel for me. He explained that cooking for Kṛṣṇa required certain standards of cleanliness and purity that were different than the ones I was accustomed to.

About thirty people attended. The decorations were similar to the ones for the initiation a few days before, except that they were more festive and the feast was more lavish. Swamiji's front room was decorated with pine boughs, and leaves and flowers were strung overhead from one side of the room to the other. Some of the new initiates came, their large red beads around their necks. They had taken vows now—sixteen rounds a day—and they chanted on their beads just as Swamiji had shown them, and they happily though self-consciously called one another by their new spiritual names.

Janakī: Swamiji said that I should wear a sārī at my wedding, and he said it should be made of silk. I asked him what color, and he said red. So Mukunda bought me an absolutely elegant sārī and some very nice jewelry.

The Swami's friends were used to seeing Janakī, as she always came with Mukunda, but usually she wore no makeup and dressed in very plain clothes. They were astounded and somewhat embarrassed to see her enter wearing jewelry, makeup, and a bright red sārī. The bride's hair was up and braided, decorated with an oval silver-filigree hair ornament. She wore heavy silver earrings, which Mukunda had purchased from an expensive Indian import shop on Fifth Avenue, and silver bracelets.

Prabhupāda directed Mukunda and Janakī to sit opposite him on the other side of the sacrificial fire arena. And just as at the initiation, he lit the incense and instructed them in the purification by water, recited the purification mantra, and then began to speak. He explained about the relationship between man and wife in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and how they should serve each other

and how they should serve Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda then asked Janakī's sister to present her formally to Mukunda as his wife. Mukunda then repeated after Swamiji: "I accept Janakī as my wife, and I shall take charge of her throughout both of our lives. We shall live together peacefully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and there will never be any separation." And then Prabhupāda turned to Janakī: "Will you accept Śrīmān Mukunda dāsa brahmacārī as your life's companion? Will you serve him always and help him to execute his Kṛṣṇa conscious activities?" And then Janakī replied, "Yes, I accept Mukunda as my husband throughout my life. There shall never be any separation between us, either in happiness or distress. I shall serve him always, and we shall live together peacefully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

No one knew anything of what was going on except Swamiji. He led the chanting, he gave the lines for the bride and groom to exchange, he told them where to sit and what to do—he, in fact, had told them to get married. He had also cooked the elaborate feast that was waiting in the kitchen for the completion of the ceremony.

Prabhupāda asked Mukunda and Janakī to exchange their flower garlands and after that to exchange sitting places. He then asked Mukunda to rub some vermilion down the part in Janakī's hair and then to cover her head with her sārī. Next came the fire sacrifice, and finally the feast.

The special feature of the wedding was the big feast. It turned out to be quite a social success. The guests ate enthusiastically, asked for more, and raved about the sensational tastes. Prabhupāda's followers, who were accustomed to the simple daily fare of rice, dāl, sabjī, and capātīs, found the feast intoxicating and ate as much as they could get. Many of Mukunda's friends were macrobiotic followers, and at first they fastidiously avoided all the sweets. But gradually the enthusiasm of the others wore down their resistance, and they became captivated by the Swami's expert cooking. "God, he's a good cook!" said Janakī. Bruce, who had missed the first initiation, was seeing the Vedic fire sacrifice and tasting the Swami's kacaurīs for the first time. He resolved on the spot to dedicate himself to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and become one of the Swamiji's disciples as soon as possible. Almost all the visitors personally approached Swamiji to thank him and congratulate him. He was happy and said it was all Kṛṣṇa's blessings, Kṛṣṇa's grace.

After the ceremony, Mukunda and his wife entertained many of the devotees and guests in their apartment. The evening had put everyone in high spirits, and Hayagrīva was reciting poetry. Then someone turned on the television to catch the scheduled interview with Allen Ginsberg, the poet, and much to everyone's happiness, Allen began playing harmonium and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He even said there was a swami on the Lower East Side who was teaching this mantra-yoga. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was new and unheard of, yet now the devotees were seeing a famous celebrity perform kīrtana on television. The whole evening seemed auspicious.

Back at his apartment, Prabhupāda, along with a few helpers, cleaned up after the ceremony. He was satisfied. He was introducing some of the major elements of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness mission. He had initiated disciples, he had married them, and he had feasted the public with kṛṣṇa-prasādam. "If I had the means," he told his followers, "I could hold a major festival like this every day."

CHAPTER TWENTY

Stay High Forever

But while this was going on, an old man, one year past his allotted three score and ten, wandered into New York's East Village and set about to prove to the world that he knew where God could be found. In only three months, the man, Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta, succeeded in convincing the world's toughest audience—Bohemians, acidheads, potheads, and hippies—that he knew the way to God: Turn Off, Sing Out, and Fall In. This new brand of holy man, with all due deference to Dr. Leary, has come forth with a brand of "Consciousness Expansion" that's sweeter than acid, cheaper than pot, and nonbustible by fuzz. How is all this possible? "Through Kṛṣṇa," the Swami says.

—from The East Village Other

October 1966

Prabhupāda's health was good that summer and fall, or so it seemed. He worked long and hard, and except for four hours of rest at night, he was always active. He would speak intensively on and on, never tiring, and his voice was strong. His smiles were strong and charming; his singing voice loud and melodious. During kīrtana he would thump Bengali mṛdaṅga rhythms on his bongo drum, sometimes for an hour. He ate heartily of rice, dāl, capatī, and vegetables with ghee. His face was full and his belly protuberant. Sometimes, in a light mood, he would drum with two fingers on his belly and say that the resonance affirmed his good health. His golden color had the radiance of youth and wellbeing preserved by seventy years of healthy, nondestructive habits. When he smiled, virility and vitality came on so strong as to embarrass a faded, dissolute New Yorker. In many ways, he was not at all like an old man. And his new followers completely accepted his active youthfulness as a part of the wonder of Swamiji, just as they had come to accept the wonder of the chanting and the wonder of Kṛṣṇa. Swamiji wasn't an ordinary man. He was spiritual. He could do anything. None of his followers dared advise him to slow down, nor did it ever really occur to them that he needed such protection—they were busy just trying to keep up with him.

During the two months at 26 Second Avenue, he had achieved what had formerly been only a dream. He now had a temple, a duly registered society, full freedom to preach, and a band of initiated disciples. When a Godbrother had written asking him how he would manage a temple in New York, Prabhupāda had said that he would need men from India but that he might find an American or two who could help. That had been last winter. Now Kṛṣṇa had put him in a different situation: he had received no help from his Godbrothers, no big donations from Indian business magnates, and no assistance from the Indian government, but he was finding success in a different way. These were "happy days," he said. He had struggled alone for a year, but then "Kṛṣṇa sent me men and money."

Yes, these were happy days for Prabhupāda, but his happiness was not like the happiness of an old man's "sunset years," as he fades into the dim comforts of retirement. His was the happiness of youth, a time of blossoming, of new powers, a time when future hopes expand without limit. He was seventy-one years old, but in ambition he was a courageous youth. He was like a young giant

just beginning to grow. He was happy because his preaching was taking hold, just as Lord Caitanya had been happy when He had traveled alone to South India, spreading the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's happiness was that of a selfless servant of Kṛṣṇa to whom Kṛṣṇa was sending candidates for devotional life. He was happy to place the seed of devotion within their hearts and to train them in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, hearing about Kṛṣṇa, and working to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda continued to accelerate. After the first initiations and the first marriage, he was eager for the next step. He was pleased by what he had, but he wanted to do more. It was the greed of the Vaiṣṇava—not a greed to have sense gratification but to take more and more for Kṛṣṇa. He would “go in like a needle and come out like a plow.” That is to say, from a small, seemingly insignificant beginning, he would expand his movement to tremendous proportions. At least, that was his desire. He was not content with his newfound success and security at 26 Second Avenue, but was yearning to increase ISKCON as far as possible. This had always been his vision, and he had written it into the ISKCON charter: “to achieve real unity and peace in the world... within the members, and humanity at large.”

* * *

Swamiji gathered his group together. He knew that once they tried it they would love it. But it would only happen if he personally went with them. Washington Square Park was only half a mile away, maybe a little more.

Ravindra Svarūpa: He never made a secret of what he was doing. He used to say, “I want everybody to know what we are doing.” Then one day, D-day came. He said, “We are going to chant in Washington Square Park.” Everybody was scared. You just don't go into a park and chant. It seemed like a weird thing to do. But he assured us, saying, “You won't be afraid when you start chanting. Kṛṣṇa will help you.” And so we trudged down to Washington Square Park, but we were very upset about it. Up until that time, we weren't exposing ourselves. I was upset about it, and I know that several other people were, to be making a public figure of yourself.

With Prabhupāda leading they set out on that fair Sunday morning, walking the city blocks from Second Avenue to Washington Square in the heart of Greenwich Village. And the way he looked—just by walking he created a sensation. None of the boys had shaved heads or robes, but because of Swamiji—with his saffron robes, his white pointy shoes, and his shaved head held high—people were astonished. It wasn't like when he would go out alone. That brought nothing more than an occasional second glance. But today, with a group of young men hurrying to keep up with him as he headed through the city streets, obviously about to do something, he caused a stir. Tough guys and kids called out names, and others laughed and made sounds. A year ago, in Butler, the Agarwals had been sure that Prabhupāda had not come to America for followers. “He didn't want to make any waves,” Sally had thought. But now he was making waves, walking through the New York City streets, headed for the first public chanting in America, followed by his first disciples.

In the park there were hundreds of people milling about—stylish, decadent Greenwich Villagers, visitors from other boroughs, tourists from other states and other lands—an amalgam of faces, nationalities, ages, and interests. As usual, someone was playing his guitar by the fountain, boys

and girls were sitting together and kissing, some were throwing Frisbees, some were playing drums or flutes or other instruments, and some were walking their dogs, talking, watching everything, wandering around. It was a typical day in the Village.

Prabhupāda went to a patch of lawn where, despite a small sign that read Keep Off the Grass, many people were lounging. He sat down, and one by one his followers sat beside him. He took out his brass hand cymbals and sang the mahā-mantra, and his disciples responded, awkwardly at first, then stronger. It wasn't as bad as they had thought it would be.

Jagannātha: It was a marvelous thing, a marvelous experience that Swamiji brought upon me. Because it opened me up a great deal, and I overcame a certain shyness—the first time to chant out in the middle of everything.

A curious crowd gathered to watch, though no one joined in. Within a few minutes, two policemen moved in through the crowd. "Who's in charge here?" an officer asked roughly. The boys looked toward Prabhupāda. "Didn't you see the sign?" an officer asked. Swamiji furrowed his brow and turned his eyes toward the sign. He got up and walked to the uncomfortably warm pavement and sat down again, and his followers straggled after to sit around him. Prabhupāda continued the chanting for half an hour, and the crowd stood listening. A guru in America had never gone onto the streets before and sung the names of God.

After kīrtana, he asked for a copy of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and had Hayagrīva read aloud from the preface. With clear articulation, Hayagrīva read: "Disparity in the human society is due to the basic principle of a godless civilization. There is God, the Almighty One, from whom everything emanates, by whom everything is maintained, and in whom everything is merged to rest..." The crowd was still. Afterward, the Swami and his followers walked back to the storefront, feeling elated and victorious. They had broken the American silence.

* * *

Allen Ginsberg lived nearby on East Tenth Street. One day he received a peculiar invitation in the mail:

Practice the transcendental sound vibration,

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

This chanting will cleanse the dust from the mirror of the mind.

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Meetings at 7 A.M. daily

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 7:00 P.M.

You are cordially invited to come and
bring your friends.

Swamiji had asked the boys to distribute it around the neighborhood.

One evening, soon after he received the invitation, Allen Ginsberg and his roommate, Peter Orlovsky, arrived at the storefront in a Volkswagen minibus. Allen had been captivated by the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra several years before, when he had first encountered it at the Kumbha-melā festival in Allahabad, India, and he had been chanting it often ever since. The devotees were impressed to see the world-famous author of *Howl* and leading figure of the beat generation enter their humble storefront. His advocacy of free sex, marijuana, and LSD, his claims of drug-induced visions of spirituality in everyday sights, his political ideas, his exploration of insanity, revolt, and nakedness, and his attempts to create a harmony of likeminded souls—all were influential on the minds of American young people, especially those living on the Lower East Side. Although by middle-class standards he was scandalous and disheveled, he was, in his own right, a figure of worldly repute, more so than anyone who had ever come to the storefront before.

Allen Ginsberg: Bhaktivedanta seemed to have no friends in America, but was alone, totally alone, and gone somewhat like a lone hippie to the nearest refugee, the place where it was cheap enough to rent.

There were a few people sitting cross-legged on the floor. I think most of them were Lower East Side hippies who had just wandered in off the street, with beards and a curiosity and inquisitiveness and a respect for spiritual presentation of some kind. Some of them were sitting there with glazed eyes, but most of them were just like gentle folk—bearded, hip, and curious. They were refugees from the middle class in the Lower East Side, looking exactly like the street sādhus in India. It was very similar, that phase in American underground history. And I liked immediately the idea that Swami Bhaktivedanta had chosen the Lower East Side of New York for his practice. He'd gone to the lower depths. He'd gone to a spot more like the side streets of Calcutta than any other place.

Allen and Peter had come for the kīrtana, but it wasn't quite time—Prabhupāda hadn't come down. They presented a new harmonium to the devotees. "It's for the kīrtanas," said Allen. "A little donation." Allen stood at the entrance to the storefront, talking with Hayagrīva, telling him how he had been chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa around the world—at peace marches, poetry readings, a procession in Prague, a writers' union in Moscow. "Secular kīrtana," said Allen, "but Hare Kṛṣṇa nonetheless." Then Prabhupāda entered. Allen and Peter sat with the congregation and joined in the kīrtana. Allen played harmonium.

Allen: I was astounded that he'd come with the chanting, because it seemed like a reinforcement from India. I had been running around singing Hare Kṛṣṇa but had never understood exactly why or what it meant. But I was surprised to see that he had a different melody, because I thought the melody I knew was the melody, the universal melody. I had gotten so used to my melody that

actually the biggest difference I had with him was over the tune—because I'd solidified it in my mind for years, and to hear another tune actually blew my mind.

After the lecture, Allen came forward to meet Prabhupāda, who was still sitting on his dais. Allen offered his respects with folded palms and touched Prabhupāda's feet, and Prabhupāda reciprocated by nodding his head and folding his palms. They talked together briefly, and then Prabhupāda returned to his apartment. Allen mentioned to Hayagrīva that he would like to come by again and talk more with Prabhupāda, so Hayagrīva invited him to come the next day and stay for lunch prasādam.

"Don't you think Swamiji is a little too esoteric for New York?" Allen asked. Hayagrīva thought. "Maybe," he replied.

Hayagrīva then asked Allen to help the Swami, since his visa would soon expire. He had entered the country with a visa for a two-month stay, and he had been extending his visa for two more months again and again. This had gone on for one year, but the last time he had applied for an extension, he had been refused. "We need an immigration lawyer," said Hayagrīva. "I'll donate to that," Allen assured him.

The next morning, Allen Ginsberg came by with a check and another harmonium. Up in Prabhupāda's apartment, he demonstrated his melody for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and then he and Prabhupāda talked.

Allen: I was a little shy with him because I didn't know where he was coming from. I had that harmonium I wanted to donate, and I had a little money. I thought it was great now that he was here to expound on the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra—that would sort of justify my singing. I knew what I was doing, but I didn't have any theological background to satisfy further inquiries, and here was someone who did. So I thought that was absolutely great. Now I could go around singing Hare Kṛṣṇa, and if anybody wanted to know what it was, I could just send them to Swami Bhaktivedanta to find out. If anyone wanted to know the technical intricacies and the ultimate history, I could send them to him.

He explained to me about his own teacher and about Caitanya and the lineage going back. His head was filled with so many things and what he was doing. He was already working on his translations. He always seemed to be sitting there just day after day and night after night. And I think he had one or two people helping him.

Prabhupāda was very cordial with Allen. Quoting a passage from Bhagavad-gītā where Kṛṣṇa says that whatever a great man does, others will follow, he requested Allen to continue chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa at every opportunity, so that others would follow his example. He told about Lord Caitanya's organizing the first civil disobedience movement in India, leading a saṅkīrtana protest march against the Muslim ruler. Allen was fascinated. He enjoyed talking with the Swami.

But they had their differences. When Allen expressed his admiration for a well-known Bengali holy man, Prabhupāda said that the holy man was bogus. Allen was shocked. He'd never before heard a swami severely criticize another's practice. Prabhupāda explained, on the basis of Vedic evidence,

the reasoning behind his criticism, and Allen admitted that he had naively thought that all holy men were one-hundred-percent holy. But now he decided that he should not simply accept a sādhu, including Prabhupāda, on blind faith. He decided to see Prabhupāda in a more severe, critical light.

Allen: I had a very superstitious attitude of respect, which probably was an idiot sense of mentality, and so Swami Bhaktivedanta's teaching was very good to make me question that. It also made me question him and not take him for granted.

Allen described a divine vision he'd had in which William Blake had appeared to him in sound, and in which he had understood the oneness of all things. A sādhu in Vṛndāvana had told Allen that this meant that William Blake was his guru. But to Prabhupāda this made no sense.

Allen: The main thing, above and beyond all our differences, was an aroma of sweetness that he had, a personal, selfless sweetness like total devotion. And that was what always conquered me, whatever intellectual questions or doubts I had, or even cynical views of ego. In his presence there was a kind of personal charm, coming from dedication, that conquered all our conflicts. Even though I didn't agree with him, I always liked to be with him.

Allen agreed, at Prabhupāda's request, to chant more and to try to give up smoking.

"Do you really intend to make these American boys into Vaiṣṇavas?" Allen asked.

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied happily, "and I will make them all brāhmaṇas."

Allen left a \$200 check to help cover the legal expenses for extending the Swami's visa and wished him good luck. "Brāhmaṇas!" Allen didn't see how such a transformation could be possible.

* * *

September 23

It was Rādhāṣṭamī, the appearance day of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort. Prabhupāda held his second initiation. Keith became Kīrtanānanda, Steve became Satsvarūpa, Bruce became Brahmānanda, and Chuck became Acyutānanda. It was another festive day with a fire sacrifice in Prabhupāda's front room and a big feast.

* * *

Prabhupāda lived amid the drug culture, in a neighborhood where the young people were almost desperately attempting to alter their consciousness, whether by drugs or by some other means—whatever was available. Prabhupāda assured them that they could easily achieve the higher consciousness they desired by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. It was inevitable that in explaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness he would make allusions to the drug experience, even if only to show that the two were contrary paths. He was familiar already with Indian "sādhus" who took gañjā and hashish on

the plea of aiding their meditations. And even before he had left India, hippie tourists had become a familiar sight on the streets of Delhi.

The hippies liked India because of the cultural mystique and easy access to drugs. They would meet their Indian counterparts, who assured them that taking hashish was spiritual, and then they would return to America and perpetrate their misconceptions of Indian spiritual culture.

It was the way of life. The local head shops carried a full line of paraphernalia. Marijuana, LSD, peyote, cocaine, and hard drugs like heroin and barbituates were easily purchased on the streets and in the parks. Underground newspapers reported important news on the drug scene, featured a cartoon character named Captain High, and ran crossword puzzles that only a seasoned "head" could answer.

Prabhupāda had to teach that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was beyond the revered LSD trip. "Do you think taking LSD can produce ecstasy and higher consciousness?" he once asked his storefront audience. "Then just imagine a roomful of LSD. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is like that." People would regularly come in and ask Swamiji's disciples, "Do you get high from this?" And the devotees would answer, "Oh, yes. You can get high just by chanting. Why don't you try it?"

Greg Scharf (Brahmānanda's brother) hadn't tried LSD; but he wanted higher consciousness, so he decided to try the chanting.

Greg: I was eighteen. Everyone at the storefront had taken LSD, and I thought maybe I should too, because I wanted to feel like part of the crowd. So I asked Umāpati, "Hey, Umāpati, do you think I should try LSD? Because I don't know what you guys are talking about." He said no, that Swamiji said you didn't need LSD. I never did take it, so I guess it was OK.

Hayagrīva: Have you ever heard of LSD? It's a psychedelic drug that comes like a pill, and if you take it you can get religious ecstasies. Do you think this can help my spiritual life?

Prabhupāda: You don't need to take anything for your spiritual life. Your spiritual life is already here.

Had anyone else said such a thing, Hayagrīva would never have agreed with him. But because Swamiji seemed "so absolutely positive," therefore "there was no question of not agreeing."

Satsvarūpa: I knew Swamiji was in a state of exalted consciousness, and I was hoping that somehow he could teach the process to me. In the privacy of his room, I asked him, "Is there spiritual advancement that you can make from which you won't fall back?" By his answer—"Yes"—I was convinced that my own attempts to be spiritual on LSD, only to fall down later, could be replaced by a total spiritual life such as Swamiji had. I could see he was convinced, and then I was convinced.

Greg: LSD was like the spiritual drug of the times, and Swamiji was the only one who dared to speak out against it, saying it was nonsense. I think that was the first battle he had to conquer in

trying to promote his movement on the Lower East Side. Even those who came regularly to the storefront thought that LSD was good.

Probably the most famous experiments with LSD in those days were by Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, Harvard psychology instructors who studied the effects of the drug, published their findings in professional journals, and advocated the use of LSD for self-realization and fulfillment. After being fired from Harvard, Timothy Leary went on to become a national priest of LSD and for some time ran an LSD commune in Millbrook, New York.

When the members of the Millbrook commune heard about the swami on the Lower East Side who led his followers in a chant that got you high, they began visiting the storefront. One night, a group of about ten hippies from Millbrook came to Swamiji's kīrtana. They all chanted (not so much in worship of Kṛṣṇa as to see what kind of high the chanting could produce), and after the lecture a Millbrook leader asked about drugs. Prabhupāda replied that drugs were not necessary for spiritual life, that they could not produce spiritual consciousness, and that all drug-induced religious visions were simply hallucinations. To realize God was not so easy or cheap that one could do it just by taking a pill or smoking. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, he explained, was a purifying process to uncover one's pure consciousness. Taking drugs would increase the covering and bar one from self-realization.

"But have you ever taken LSD?" The question now became a challenge.

"No," Prabhupāda replied. "I have never taken any of these things, not even cigarettes or tea."

"If you haven't taken it, then how can you say what it is?" The Millbrookers looked around, smiling. Two or three even burst out with laughter, and they snapped their fingers, thinking the Swami had been checkmated.

"I have not taken," Prabhupāda replied regally from his dais. "But my disciples have taken all these things—marijuana, LSD—many times, and they have given them all up. You can hear from them. Hayagrīva, you can speak." And Hayagrīva sat up a little and spoke out in his stentorian best.

"Well, no matter how high you go on LSD, you eventually reach a peak, and then you have to come back down. Just like traveling into outer space in a rocket ship. [He gave one of Swamiji's familiar examples.] Your spacecraft can travel very far away from the earth for thousands of miles, day after day, but it cannot simply go on traveling and traveling. Eventually it must land. On LSD, we experience going up, but we always have to come down again. That's not spiritual consciousness. When you actually attain spiritual or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you stay high. Because you go to Kṛṣṇa, you don't have to come down. You can stay high forever."

Prabhupāda was sitting in his back room with Hayagrīva and Umāpati and other disciples. The evening meeting had just ended, and the visitors from Millbrook had gone. "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so nice, Swamiji," Umāpati spoke up. "You just get higher and higher, and you don't come down."

Prabhupāda smiled. "Yes, that's right."

"No more coming down," Umāpati said, laughing, and the others also began to laugh. Some clapped their hands, repeating, "No more coming down."

The conversation inspired Hayagrīva and Umāpati to produce a new handbill:

STAY HIGH FOREVER!

No More Coming Down

Practice Krishna Consciousness

Expand your Consciousness by practicing the

* TRANSCENDENTAL SOUND VIBRATION *

HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE

HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE

The leaflet went on to extol Kṛṣṇa consciousness over any other high. It included phrases like "end all bringdowns" and "turn on," and it spoke against "employing artificially induced methods of self-realization and expanded consciousness." Someone objected to the flyer's "playing too much off the hippie mentality," but Prabhupāda said it was all right.

Greg: When these drug people on the Lower East Side came and talked to Swamiji, he was so patient with them. He was speaking on a philosophy which they had never heard before. When someone takes LSD, they're really into themselves, and they don't hear properly when someone talks to them. So Swamiji would make particular points, and they wouldn't understand him. So he would have to make the same point again. He was very patient with these people, but he would not give in to their claim that LSD was a bona fide spiritual aid to self-realization.

* * *

October 1966

Tompkins Square Park was the park on the Lower East Side. On the south, it was bordered by Seventh Street, with its four- and five-storied brownstone tenements. On the north side was Tenth, with more brownstones, but in better condition, and the very old, small building that housed the Tompkins Square branch of the New York Public Library. On Avenue B, the park's east border, stood St. Brigid's Church, built in 1848, when the neighborhood had been entirely Irish. The

church, school, and rectory still occupied much of the block. And the west border of the park, Avenue A, was lined with tiny old candy stores selling newspapers, magazines, cigarettes, and egg-creme sodas at the counter. There were also a few bars, several grocery stores, and a couple of Slavic restaurants specializing in inexpensive vegetable broths, which brought Ukranians and hippies side by side for bodily nourishment.

The park's ten acres held many tall trees, but at least half the park was paved. A network of five-foot-high heavy wrought-iron fences weaved through the park, lining the walkways and protecting the grass. The fences and the many walkways and entrances to the park gave it the effect of a maze.

Since the weather was still warm and it was Sunday, the park was crowded with people. Almost all the space on the benches that lined the walkways was occupied. There were old people, mostly Ukranians, dressed in outdated suits and sweaters, even in the warm weather, sitting together in clans, talking. There were many children in the park also, mostly Puerto Ricans and blacks but also fair-haired, hard-faced slum kids racing around on bikes or playing with balls and Frisbees. The basketball and handball courts were mostly taken by the teenagers. And as always, there were plenty of loose, running dogs.

A marble miniature gazebo (four pillars and a roof, with a drinking fountain inside) was a remnant from the old days—1891, according to the inscription. On its four sides were the words HOPE, FAITH, CHARITY, and TEMPERANCE. But someone had sprayed the whole structure with black paint, making crude designs and illegible names and initials. Today, a bench had been taken over by several conga and bongo drummers, and the whole park pulsed with their demanding rhythms.

And the hippies were there, different from the others. The bearded Bohemian men and their long-haired young girl friends dressed in old blue jeans were still an unusual sight. Even in the Lower East Side melting pot, their presence created tension. They were from middle-class families, and so they had not been driven to the slums by dire economic necessity. This created conflicts in their dealings with the underprivileged immigrants. And the hippies' well-known proclivity for psychedelic drugs, their revolt against their families and affluence, and their absorption in the avant-garde sometimes made them the jeered minority among their neighbors. But the hippies just wanted to do their own thing and create their own revolution for "love and peace," so usually they were tolerated, although not appreciated.

There were various groups among the young and hip at Tompkins Square Park. There were friends who had gone to the same school together, who took the same drug together, or who agreed on a particular philosophy of art, literature, politics, or metaphysics. There were lovers. There were groups hanging out together for reasons undecipherable, except for the common purpose of doing their own thing. And there were others, who lived like hermits—a loner would sit on a park bench, analyzing the effects of cocaine, looking up at the strangely rustling green leaves of the trees and the blue sky above the tenements and then down to the garbage at his feet, as he helplessly followed his mind from fear to illumination, to disgust to hallucination, on and on, until after a few hours the drug began to wear off and he was again a common stranger. Sometimes they would sit up all night, "spaced out" in the park, until at last, in the light of morning, they would stretch out on benches to sleep.

Hippies especially took to the park on Sundays. They at least passed through the park on their way to St. Mark's Place, Greenwich Village, or the Lexington Avenue subway at Astor Place, or the IND subway at Houston and Second, or to catch an uptown bus on First Avenue, a downtown bus on Second, or a crosstown on Ninth. Or they went to the park just to get out of their apartments and sit together in the open air—to get high again, to talk, or to walk through the park's maze of pathways.

But whatever the hippies' diverse interests and drives, the Lower East Side was an essential part of the mystique. It was not just a dirty slum; it was the best place in the world to conduct the experiment in consciousness. For all its filth and threat of violence and the confined life of its brownstone tenements, the Lower East Side was still the forefront of the revolution in mind expansion. Unless you were living there and taking psychedelics or marijuana, or at least intellectually pursuing the quest for free personal religion, you weren't enlightened, and you weren't taking part in the most progressive evolution of human consciousness. And it was this searching—a quest beyond the humdrum existence of the ordinary, materialistic, “straight” American—that brought unity to the otherwise eclectic gathering of hippies on the Lower East Side.

Into this chaotic pageant Swamiji entered with his followers and sat down to hold a kīrtana. Three or four devotees who arrived ahead of him selected an open area of the park, put out the Oriental carpet Robert Nelson had donated, sat down on it, and began playing karatālas and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Immediately some boys rode up on their bicycles, braked just short of the carpet, and stood astride their bikes, curiously and irreverently staring. Other passersby gathered to listen.

Meanwhile Swamiji, accompanied by half a dozen disciples, was walking the eight blocks from the storefront. Brahmānanda carried the harmonium and the Swami's drum. Kīrtanānanda, who was now shaven-headed at Swamiji's request and dressed in loose-flowing canary yellow robes, created an extra sensation. Drivers pulled their cars over to have a look, their passengers leaning forward, agape at the outrageous dress and shaved head. As the group passed a store, people inside would poke each other and indicate the spectacle. People came to the windows of their tenements, taking in the Swami and his group as if a parade were passing. The Puerto Rican tough guys, especially, couldn't restrain themselves from exaggerated reactions. “Hey, Buddha!” they taunted. “Hey, you forgot to change your pajamas!” They made shrill screams as if imitating Indian war whoops they had heard in Hollywood westerns.

“Hey, Arabs!” exclaimed one heckler, who began imitating what he thought was an Eastern dance. No one on the street knew anything about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, nor even of Hindu culture and customs. To them, the Swami's entourage was just a bunch of crazy hippies showing off. But they didn't quite know what to make of the Swami. He was different. Nevertheless, they were suspicious. Some, however, like Irving Halpern, a veteran Lower East Side resident, felt sympathetic toward this stranger, who was “apparently a very dignified person on a peaceful mission.”

Irving Halpern: A lot of people had spectacularized notions of what a swami was. As though they were going to suddenly see people lying on little mattresses made out of nails—and all kind of other absurd notions. Yet here came just a very graceful, peaceful, gentle, obviously well-meaning being into a lot of hostility.

"Hippies!"

"What are they, Communists?"

While the young taunted, the middle-aged and elderly shook their heads or stared, cold and uncomprehending. The way to the park was spotted with blasphemies, ribald jokes, and tension, but no violence. After the successful kīrtana in Washington Square Park, Prabhupāda had regularly been sending out "parades" of three or four devotees, chanting and playing hand cymbals through the streets and sidewalks of the Lower East Side. On one occasion, they had been bombarded with water balloons and eggs, and they were sometimes faced with bullies looking for a fight. But they were never attacked—just stared at, laughed at, or shouted after.

Today, the ethnic neighbors just assumed that Prabhupāda and his followers had come onto the streets dressed in outlandish costumes as a joke, just to turn everything topsy-turvy and cause stares and howls. They felt that their responses were only natural for any normal, respectable American slum-dweller.

So it was quite an adventure before the group even reached the park. Swamiji, however, remained unaffected. "What are they saying?" he asked once or twice, and Brahmānanda explained. Prabhupāda had a way of holding his head high, his chin up, as he walked forward. It made him look aristocratic and determined. His vision was spiritual—he saw everyone as a spiritual soul and Kṛṣṇa as the controller of everything. Yet aside from that, even from a worldly point of view he was unafraid of the city's pandemonium. After all, he was an experienced "Calcutta man."

The kīrtana had been going for about ten minutes when Swamiji arrived. Stepping out of his white rubber slippers, just as if he were home in the temple, he sat down on the rug with his followers, who had now stopped their singing and were watching him. He wore a pink sweater, and around his shoulders a khādī wrapper. He smiled. Looking at his group, he indicated the rhythm by counting, one... two... three. Then he began clapping his hands heavily as he continued counting, "One... two... three." The karatālas followed, at first with wrong beats, but he kept the rhythm by clapping his hands, and then they got it, clapping hands, clashing cymbals artlessly to a slow, steady beat.

He began singing prayers that no one else knew. Vande 'haṁ śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalaṁ śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāṁś ca. His voice was sweet like the harmonium, rich in the nuances of Bengali melody. Sitting on the rug under a large oak tree, he sang the mysterious Sanskrit prayers. None of his followers knew any mantra but Hare Kṛṣṇa, but they knew Swamiji. And they kept the rhythm, listening closely to him while the trucks rumbled on the street and the conga drums pulsed in the distance.

As he sang—śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātaṁ—the dogs came by, kids stared, a few mockers pointed fingers: "Hey, who is that priest, man?" But his voice was a shelter beyond the clashing dualities. His boys went on ringing cymbals while he sang alone: śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān.

Prabhupāda sang prayers in praise of of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's pure conjugal love for Kṛṣṇa, the beloved of the gopīs. Each word, passed down for hundreds of years by the intimate associates of Kṛṣṇa, was saturated with deep transcendental meaning that only he understood. Saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānvitāṁś ca. They waited for him to begin Hare Kṛṣṇa, although hearing him chant was exciting enough.

More people came—which was what Prabhupāda wanted. He wanted them chanting and dancing with him, and now his followers wanted that too. They wanted to be with him. They had tried together at the U.N., Ananda Ashram, and Washington Square. It seemed that this would be the thing they would always do—go with Swamiji and sit and chant. He would always be with them, chanting.

Then he began the mantra—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. They responded, too low and muddled at first, but he returned it to them again, singing it right and triumphant. Again they responded, gaining heart, ringing karatālas and clapping hands—one... two... three, one... two... three. Again he sang it alone, and they stayed, hanging closely on each word, clapping, beating cymbals, and watching him looking back at them from his inner concentration—his old-age wisdom, his bhakti—and out of love for Swamiji, they broke loose from their surroundings and joined him as a chanting congregation. Swamiji played his small drum, holding its strap in his left hand, bracing the drum against his body, and with his right hand playing intricate mṛdaṅga rhythms.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. He was going strong after half an hour, repeating the mantra, carrying them with him as interested onlookers gathered in greater numbers. A few hippies sat down on the edge of the rug, copying the cross-legged sitting posture, listening, clapping, trying the chanting, and the small inner circle of Prabhupāda and his followers grew, as gradually more people joined.

As always, his kīrtana attracted musicians.

Irving Halpern: I make flutes, and I play musical instruments. There are all kinds of different instruments that I make. When the Swami came, I went up and started playing, and he welcomed me. Whenever a new musician would join and play their first note, he would extend his arms. It would be as though he had stepped up to the podium and was going to lead the New York Philharmonic. I mean, there was this gesture that every musician knows. You just know when someone else wants you to play with them and feels good that you are playing with them. And this very basic kind of musician communication was there with him, and I related to it very quickly. And I was happy about it.

Lone musicians were always loitering in different parts of the park, and when they heard they could play with the Swami's chanting and that they were welcome, then they began to come by, one by one. A saxophone player came just because there was such a strong rhythm section to play with. Others, like Irving Halpern, saw it as something spiritual, with good vibrations. As the musicians joined, more passersby were drawn into the kīrtana. Prabhupāda had been singing both lead and chorus, and many who had joined now sang the lead part also, so that there was a constant chorus of chanting. During the afternoon, the crowd grew to more than a hundred, with a dozen musicians

trying—with their conga and bongo drums, bamboo flutes, metal flutes, mouth organs, wood and metal “clackers,” tambourines, and guitars—to stay with the Swami.

Irving Halpern: The park resounded. The musicians were very careful in listening to the mantras. When the Swami sang Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, there was sometimes a Kṛ-ṣa-ṇa, a tripling of what had been a double syllable. It would be usually on the first stanza, and the musicians really picked up on it. The Swami would pronounce it in a particular way, and the musicians were really meticulous and listened very carefully to the way the Swami would sing. And we began to notice that there were different melodies for the same brief sentence, and we got to count on that one regularity, like one would count on the conductor of an orchestra or the lead singer of a madrigal. It was really pleasant, and people would dig one another in their ribs. They would say, “Hey, see!” We would catch and repeat a particular subtle pronunciation of a Sanskrit phrase that the audience, in their enthusiasm, while they would be dancing or playing, had perhaps missed. Or the Swami would add an extra beat, but it meant something, in the way in which the drummer, who at that time was the Swami, the main drummer, would hit the drums.

I have talked to a couple of musicians about it, and we agreed that in his head this Swami must have had hundreds and hundreds of melodies that had been brought back from the real learning from the other side of the world. So many people came there just to tune in to the musical gift, the transmission of the dharma. “Hey,” they would say, “listen to this holy monk.” People were really sure there were going to be unusual feats, grandstanding, flashy levitation, or whatever people expected was going to happen. But when the simplicity of what the Swami was really saying, when you began to sense it—whether you were motivated to actually make a lifetime commitment and go this way of life, or whether you merely wanted to appreciate it and place it in a place and give certain due respect to it—it turned you around.

And that was interesting, too, the different ways in which people regarded the kīrtana. Some people thought it was a prelude. Some people thought it was a main event. Some people liked the music. Some people liked the poetic sound of it.

Then Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky arrived, along with some of their friends. Allen surveyed the scene and found a seat among the chanters. With his black beard, his eyeglasses, his bald spot surrounded by long, black ringlets of hair, Allen Ginsberg, the poet-patriarch come to join the chanting, greatly enhanced the local prestige of the kīrtana. Prabhupāda, while continuing his ecstatic chanting and drum-playing, acknowledged Allen and smiled.

A reporter from The New York Times dropped by and asked Allen for an interview, but he refused: “A man should not be disturbed while worshipping.” The Times would have to wait.

Allen: Tompkins Square Park was a hotbed of spiritual conflict in those days, so it was absolutely great. All of a sudden, in the midst of all the talk and drugs and theory, for some people to put their bodies, their singing, to break through the intellectual ice and come out with total bhakti—that was really amazing.

The blacks and Puerto Ricans were out there with drums too, doing conga. But here was a totally different kind of group, some of them with shaven heads, and it was interesting. It was a repetitious chant, but that was also great. It was an easy chant to get into. It was an open scene. There was no boxed corner there in the actual practice. So, general smiles and approval and encouragement as a beginning of some kind of real communal get-together in the park, with a kind of serious underbase for exchange—instead of just hog-dog on the drums.

Prabhupāda was striking to see. His brow was furrowed in the effort of singing loud, and his visage was strong. The veins in his temples stood out visibly, and his jaw jutted forward as he sang his “Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hare Kṛṣṇa!” for all to hear. Although his demeanor was pleasant, his chanting was intensive, sometimes straining, and everything about him was concentration.

It wasn't someone else's yoga retreat or silent peace vigil, but a pure chanting be-in of Prabhupāda's own doing. It was a new wave, something everyone could take part in. The community seemed to be accepting it. It became so popular that the ice cream vendor came over to make sales. Beside Prabhupāda a group of young, blond-haired boys, five or six years old, were just sitting around. A young Polish boy stood staring. Someone began burning frankincense on a glowing coal in a metal strainer, and the sweet fumes billowed among the flutists, drummers, and chanters.

Swamiji motioned to his disciples, and they got up and began dancing. Tall, thin Stryadhīṣa, his back pockets stuffed with Stay High Forever flyers, raised his hands and began to dance. Beside him, in a black turtleneck, big chanting beads around his neck, danced Acyutānanda, his curly, almost frizzy, hair long and disarrayed. Then Brahmānanda got up. He and Acyutānanda stood facing each other, arms outstretched as in the picture of Lord Caitanya's kīrtana. Photographers in the crowd moved forward. The boys danced, shifting their weight from left foot to right foot, striking a series of angelic poses, their large, red chanting beads around their necks. They were doing the Swami step.

Brahmānanda: Once I got up, I thought I would have to remain standing for as long as Swamiji played the drum. It will be an offense, I thought, if I sit down while he's still playing. So I danced for an hour.

Prabhupāda gave a gesture of acceptance by a typically Indian movement of his head, and then he raised his arms, inviting more dancers. More of his disciples began dancing, and even a few hippies got up and tried it. Prabhupāda wanted everyone to sing and dance in saṅkīrtana. The dance was a sedate swaying and a stepping of bare feet on the rug, and the dancers' arms were raised high, their fingers extended toward the sky above the branches of the autumn trees. Here and there throughout the crowd, chanters were enjoying private ecstasies: a girl with her eyes closed played finger cymbals and shook her head dreamily as she chanted. A Polish lady with a very old, worn face and a babushka around her head stared incredulously at the girl. Little groups of old women in kerchiefs, some of them wearing sunglasses, stood here and there among the crowd, talking animatedly and pointing out the interesting sights in the kīrtana. Kīrtanānanda was the only one in a dhotī, looking like a young version of Prabhupāda. The autumn afternoon sunlight fell softly on the group, spotlighting them in a golden glow with long, cool shadows.

The harmonium played a constant drone, and a boy wearing a military fatigue jacket improvised atonal creations on a wooden recorder. Yet the total sound of the instruments blended, and Swamiji's voice emerged above the mulling tones of each chord. And so it went for hours. Prabhupāda held his head and shoulders erect, although at the end of each line of the mantra, he would sometimes shrug his shoulders before he started the next line. His disciples stayed close by him, sitting on the same rug, religious ecstasy visible in their eyes. Finally, he stopped.

Immediately he stood up, and they knew he was going to speak. It was four o'clock, and the warm autumn sun was still shining on the park. The atmosphere was peaceful and the audience attentive and mellow from the concentration on the mantra. He began to speak to them, thanking everyone for joining in the kīrtana. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, he said, had been introduced five hundred years ago in West Bengal by Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Hare means "O energy of the Lord," Kṛṣṇa is the Lord, and Rāma is also a name of the Supreme Lord, meaning "the highest pleasure." His disciples sat at his feet, listening. Rāya Rāma squinted through his shielding hand into the sun to see Swamiji, and Kīrtanānanda's head was cocked to one side, like a bird's who is listening to the ground.

He stood erect by the stout oak, his hands folded loosely before him in a proper speaker's posture, his light saffron robes covering him gracefully. The tree behind him seemed perfectly placed, and the sunshine dappled leafy shadows against the thick trunk. Behind him, through the grove of trees, was the steeple of St. Brigid's. On his right was a dumpy, middle-aged woman wearing a dress and hairdo that had been out of style in the United States for twenty-five years. On his left was a bold looking hippie girl in tight denims and beside her a young black man in a black sweater, his arms folded across his chest. Next was a young father holding an infant, then a bearded young street sādhu, his long hair parted in the middle, and two ordinary, short-haired middle-class men and their young female companions. Many in the crowd, although standing close by, became distracted, looking off here and there.

Prabhupāda explained that there are three platforms—sensual, mental, and intellectual—and above them is the spiritual platform. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is on the spiritual platform, and it is the best process for reviving our eternal, blissful consciousness. He invited everyone to attend the meetings at 26 Second Avenue and concluded his brief speech by saying, "Thank you very much. Please chant with us." Then he sat down, took the drum, and began the kīrtana again.

If it were risky for a seventy-one-year-old man to thump a drum and shout so loud, then he would take that risk for Kṛṣṇa. It was too good to stop. He had come far from Vṛndāvana, survived the non-Kṛṣṇa yoga society, waited all winter in obscurity. America had waited hundreds of years with no Kṛṣṇa-chanting. No "Hare Kṛṣṇa" had come from Thoreau's or Emerson's appreciations, though they had pored over English translations of the Gītā and Purāṇas. And no kīrtana had come from Vivekananda's famous speech on behalf of Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. So now that he finally had kṛṣṇa-bhakti going, flowing like the Ganges to the sea, it could not stop. In his heart he felt the infinite will of Lord Caitanya to deliver the fallen souls.

He knew this was the desire of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his own spiritual master, even though caste-conscious brāhmaṇas in India would disapprove of his associating with such untouchables as these drug-mad American meat-eaters and their girl friends. But Swamiji explained

that he was in full accord with the scriptures. The Bhāgavatam had clearly stated that Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be delivered to all races. Everyone was a spiritual soul, and regardless of birth they could be brought to the highest spiritual platform by chanting the holy name. Never mind whatever sinful things they were doing, these people were perfect candidates for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Tompkins Square Park was Kṛṣṇa's plan; it was also part of the earth, and these people were members of the human race. And the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa was the dharma of the age.

* * *

Walking back home in the early evening, past the shops and crowded tenements, followed by more than a dozen interested new people from the park, the Swami again sustained occasional shouts and taunts. But those who followed him from the park were still feeling the aura of an ecstasy that easily tolerated a few taunts from the street. Prabhupāda, especially, was undisturbed. As he walked with his head high, not speaking, he was gravely absorbed in his thoughts. And yet his eyes actively noticed people and places and exchanged glances with those whom he passed on his way along Seventh Street, past the churches and funeral homes, across First Avenue to the noisy, heavily trafficked Second Avenue, then down Second past liquor stores, coin laundries, delicatessens, past the Iglesia Alianza Cristiana Missionera, the Koh-I-Noor Intercontinental Restaurant Palace, then past the Church of the Nativity, and finally back home to number twenty-six.

There was a crowd of people from the park standing on the sidewalk outside the storefront—young people waiting for him to arrive and unlock the door to Matchless Gifts. They wanted to know more about the dance and the chant and the elderly swami and his disciples who had created such a beautiful scene in the park. They filled the storefront. Outside on the sidewalk, the timid or uncommitted loitered near the door or window, smoking and waiting or peering in and trying to see the paintings on the wall. Swamiji entered and walked directly to his dais and sat down before the largest gathering that had ever graced his temple. He spoke further of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the words coming as naturally as breathing as he quoted the Sanskrit authority behind what they had all been experiencing in the park. Just as they had all chanted today, he said, so everyone should chant always.

A long-haired girl sitting close to Swamiji's dais raised her hand and asked, seemingly in trance, "When I am chanting, I feel a great concentration of energy on my forehead, and then a buzzing comes and a reddish light."

"Just keep on chanting," Swamiji replied. "It will clear up."

"Well, what does the chanting produce?" She seemed to be coming out of her trance now.

"Chanting produces chanting," he replied. "Just as when you are calling the name of your beloved. If there is someone you love very much, then you want to repeat his name again and again. It is out of love."

A man spoke up without raising his hand. "But isn't it just a kind of hypnotism on sound? Like if I chanted Coca-Cola over and over, wouldn't it be the same?"

"No," Prabhupāda replied, "you take any word, repeat it for ten minutes, and you will feel disgusted. But we chant twenty-four hours, and we don't feel tired. Oh, we feel new energy." The questions seemed more relevant today. The guests had all been chanting in the park, and now they were probing philosophically into what they had experienced. The Swami's followers marked this as a victory. And they felt some responsibility as hosts and guides for the others. Swamiji had asked Kīrtanānanda to prepare some prasādam for the guests, and soon Kīrtanānanda appeared with small paper cups of sweet rice for everyone.

"The chanting process is just to cleanse the mind," said Prabhupāda. "We have so many misunderstandings about ourself, about this world, about God, and about the relationships between these things. We have so many misgivings. This chanting will help to cleanse the mind. Then you will understand that this chanting is not different from Kṛṣṇa."

A boy who was accompanying the long-haired girl spoke out incoherently: "Yes. No. I... I... I..."

Prabhupāda: Yes. Yes. Yes. In the beginning we have to chant. We may be in whatever position we are. It doesn't matter. If you begin chanting, the first benefit will be ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam: the mind will be clear of all dirty things, and the next stage will be that the sufferings, the miseries of this material world, will subside.

Boy: Well, I don't quite understand what the material world is, because...

Prabhupāda: The material world is full of sufferings and miseries. Don't you understand that? Are you happy?

Boy: Sometimes I'm happy, sometimes I'm not.

Prabhupāda: No. You are not happy. That "sometimes" is your imagination. Just like a diseased man says, "Oh, yes, I am well." What is that "well"? He is going to die, and he is well?

Boy: I don't claim any ultimate happiness.

Prabhupāda: No, you do not know what happiness is.

Boy: But it's greater or lesser.

Prabhupāda: Yes, you do not know what is happiness.

An older man, standing with his arms folded near the rear of the temple: Well, of course, that sorrow or that suffering might add the spice to make that suffering that goes in between seem happiness.

Prabhupāda: No. The thing is that there are different kinds of miseries. That we all understand. It is only due to our ignorance that we don't care for it. Just like a man who is suffering for a long time. He has forgotten what is real happiness. Similarly, the sufferings are there already. For example

(and he directed himself to the young man with his girl friend), take for example that you are a young man. Now would you like to become an old man?

Boy: I will become an old man in the process of—

Prabhupāda: “You will become” means you will be forced to become an old man. But you don't like to become an old man.

Boy: I am not going to be forced to become an old man.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Yes. Forced! You will be forced.

Boy: I don't see why.

Prabhupāda: If you don't want to become an old man, you will be forced to become an old man.

Boy: It's one of the conditions of—

Prabhupāda: Yes. That condition is miserable.

Boy: I find it not miserable.

Prabhupāda: Because you're a young man. But ask any old man how he is suffering. You see? A diseased man—do you want to be diseased?

Boy: I wouldn't search it out.

Prabhupāda: Hmm?

Boy: I wouldn't search it out.

Prabhupāda: No, no. Just answer me. Do you like to be diseased?

Boy: What is disease?

Prabhupāda: Just answer.

Boy: What is disease?

Prabhupāda: Oh? You have never suffered from disease? You have never suffered from disease? (Prabhupāda looks dramatically incredulous)

Boy: I have had... I have had the mumps and the measles and whooping cough, which is what everyone has—and you get over it. (Some people in the audience laugh.)

Prabhupāda: Everyone may be suffering, but that does not mean that it is not suffering. We have to admit that we are always in suffering.

Boy: If I have never known happiness, I feel sure I have never known suffering either.

Prabhupāda: That is due to your ignorance. We are in suffering. We don't want to die, but death is there. We don't want to be diseased, but disease is there. We don't want to become old—old age is there. We don't want so many things, but they are forced upon us, and any sane man will admit that these are sufferings. But if you are accustomed to take these sufferings, then you say it is all right. But any sane man won't like to be diseased. He won't like to be old. And he won't like to die. Why do you have this peace movement? Because if there is war, there will be death. So people are afraid. They are making agitation: "There should be no war." Do you think that death is a very pleasurable thing?

Boy: I have never experienced—

Prabhupāda: You have experienced—and forgotten. Many times you have died. You have experienced, but you have forgotten. Forgetfulness is no excuse. Suppose a child forgot some suffering. That does not mean he did not suffer.

Boy: No, I agree. I agree.

Prabhupāda: Yes. So suffering is there. You have to take direction from realized souls, from authorities. Just like in the Bhagavad-gītā it is said, *duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam*: this world is full of miseries. So one has to realize it. Unless we understand that this place is miserable, there is no question of how to get out of it. A person who doesn't develop this understanding is not fully developed. Just like the animals—they do not understand what misery is. They are satisfied.

It was late when he finally returned to his apartment. One of the boys brought him a cup of hot milk, and someone remarked they should do the chanting in the park every week. "Every day," he replied. Even while half a dozen people were present, he lay down on his thin mat. He continued to speak for some minutes, and then his voice trailed off, preaching in fragmented words. He appeared to doze. It was ten o'clock. They tiptoed out, softly shutting the door.

* * *

October 10

It was early. Swamiji had not yet come down for class, and the sun had not yet risen. Satsvarūpa and Kīrtanānanda sat on the floor of the storefront, reading a clipping from the morning Times.

Satsvarūpa: Has the Swami seen it?

Kīrtanānanda: Yes, just a few minutes ago. He said it's very important. It's historic. He especially liked that it was The New York Times.

Satsvarūpa (reading aloud): "SWAMI'S FLOCK CHANTS IN PARK TO FIND ECSTASY."

Fifty Followers Clap and Sway to Hypnotic Music at East Side Ceremony. Sitting under a tree in a Lower East Side park and occasionally dancing, fifty followers of a Hindu swami repeated a sixteen-word chant for two hours yesterday...

It was more than two hours.

... for two hours yesterday afternoon to the accompaniment of cymbals, tambourines, sticks, drums, bells, and a small reed organ. Repetition of the chant, Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta says, is the best way to achieve self-realization in this age of destruction. While children played on Hoving's Hill, a pile of dirt in the middle of Tompkins Square Park...

Hoving's Hill?

Kīrtanānanda: I think it's a joke named after the Parks Commissioner.

Satsvarūpa: Oh.

... Hoving's Hill, a pile of dirt in the middle of Tompkins Square Park, or bicycled along the sunny walks, many in the crowd of about a hundred persons standing around the chanters found themselves swaying to or clapping hands in time to the hypnotic rhythmic music. "It brings a state of ecstasy," said Allen Ginsberg the poet, who was one of the celebrants. "For one thing," Allen Ginsberg said, "the syllables force yoga breath control. That's one physiological explanation.

Satsvarūpa and Kīrtanānanda (laughing): That's nonsense.

"The ecstasy of the chant or mantra Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare...

Kīrtanānanda: The Swami said that's the best part. Because they have printed the mantra, it's all-perfect. Whoever reads this can be purified just the same as if they had chanted.

Satsvarūpa (continuing):

"... has replaced LSD and other drugs for many of the swami's followers," Mr. Ginsberg said. He explained that Hare Krishna, pronounced Hahray, is the name for Vishnu, a Hindu god, as the "bringer of light." Rama, pronounced Rahmah, is the incarnation of Vishnu as "the prince of responsibility."

What? Where did he get that? It sounds like something out of an encyclopedia.

"The chant, therefore, names different aspects of God," Mr. Ginsberg said.

Why so much from Mr. Ginsberg? Why not Swamiji?

Another celebrant, 26-year-old Howard M. Wheeler, who described himself as a former English instructor at Ohio State University, now devoting his full time to the swami, said, "I myself took fifty doses of LSD and a dozen of peyote in two years, and now nothing."

(Laughter.)

The swami orders his followers to give up "all intoxicants, including coffee, tea, and cigarettes," he said in an interview after the ceremony. "In this sense we are helping your government," he added. However, he indicated the government apparently has not appreciated this help sufficiently, for the Department of Immigration recently told Swami Bhaktivedanta that his one-year visitor's visa had expired and that he must leave, he said. The case is being appealed.

The swami, a swarthy man with short-cropped grayish hair and clad in a salmon-colored robe over a pink sweater, said that when he first met his own teacher, or guru, in 1922, he was told to spread the cult of Krishna to the Western countries through the English language. "Therefore in this old age (71) I have taken so much risk."

It says that we're going to come there and chant every Sunday. "His followers include some social workers." I guess that's me.

Kīrtanānanda: I think this article will bring a lot of new people.

The Swami came down for class. The morning was chilly, and he wore a peach-colored turtleneck jersey his disciples had bought for him at a shop on Orchard Street. They had also started wearing such jerseys—a kind of unofficial uniform. Swamiji didn't mention the Times article. He began singing the Sanskrit prayers. Vande 'haṁ śrī-guroḥ: "I offer my obeisances to my spiritual master..." Then he began singing Hare Kṛṣṇa, and the boys joined in. "Sing softly," Prabhupāda cautioned them.

But no sooner had he spoken than water began pouring down through the cracks in the ceiling. The man upstairs didn't like early-morning kīrtanas, and he began stomping his feet to show that this flood was no accident.

"What is this?" Prabhupāda looked up, disturbed, but with a touch of amusement. The boys looked around. Water was pouring down in several places. "Get some pots," he said. A boy ran upstairs to Swamiji's apartment to get pots from the kitchen. Soon three pots were catching the water as it dripped in three separate places.

"How does he do it?" asked Umāpati. "Is he pouring water onto the floor?" Prabhupāda asked Brahmānanda to go up and speak to the man, to tell him that the kīrtana would be a quiet one. Then he asked everyone to sit back down amid the dripping and the pots and continue chanting. "Softly," he said. "Softly."

That evening, the temple was filled with guests. "It is so much kindness of the Supreme Lord," Prabhupāda said, "that He wants to associate with you. So you should receive Him. Always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Now this language is Sanskrit, and some of you do not know the meaning. Still, it is so

attractive that when we chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa in the park, oh, old ladies, gentlemen, boys and girls, all took part... But there are also complaints. Just like we are receiving daily reports that our saṅkīrtana movement is disturbing some tenants here."

* * *

Ravindra Svarūpa was walking down Second Avenue, on his way to the Swami's morning class, when an acquaintance came out of the Gems Spa Candy and News Store and said, "Hey, your Swami is in the newspaper. Did you see?" "Yeah," Ravindra Svarūpa replied, "The New York Times."

"No," his friend said. "Today." And he held up a copy of the latest edition of The East Village Other. The front page was filled with a two-color photo of the Swami, his hands folded decorously at his waist, standing in yellow robes in front of the big tree in Tompkins Square Park. He was speaking to a small crowd that had gathered around, and his disciples were at his feet. The big steeple of St. Brigid's formed a silhouette behind him.

Above the photo was the single headline, "SAVE EARTH NOW!!" and beneath was the mantra: "HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE." Below the mantra were the words, "See Centerfold." That was the whole front page.

Ravindra Svarūpa took the newspaper and opened to the center, where he found a long article and a large photo of Swamiji with his left hand on his head, grinning blissfully in an unusual, casual moment. His friend gave him the paper, and Ravindra Svarūpa hurried to Swamiji. When he reached the storefront, several boys went along with him to show Swamiji the paper.

"Look!" Ravindra Svarūpa handed it over. "This is the biggest local newspaper! Everybody reads it." Prabhupāda opened his eyes wide. He read aloud, "Save earth now." And he looked up at the faces of the boys. Umāpati and Hayagrīva wondered aloud what it meant—"Save earth now." Was it an ecological pun? Was it a reference to staving off nuclear disaster? Was it poking fun at Swamiji's evangelism?

"Well," said Umāpati, "after all, this is The East Village Other. It could mean anything."

"Swamiji is saving the earth," Kīrtanānanda said.

"We are trying to," Prabhupāda replied, "by Kṛṣṇa's grace." Methodically, he put on the eyeglasses he usually reserved for reading the Bhāgavatam and carefully appraised the page from top to bottom. The newspaper looked incongruous in his hands. Then he began turning the pages. He stopped at the centerfold and looked at the picture of himself and laughed, then paused, studying the article. "So," he said, "read it." He handed the paper to Hayagrīva.

"Once upon a time,..." Hayagrīva began loudly. It was a fanciful story of a group of theologians who had killed an old man in a church and of the subsequent press report that God was now dead. But, the story went on, some people didn't believe it. They had dug up the body and found it to be

“not the body of God, but that of His P.R. man: organized religion. At once the good tidings swept across the wide world. GOD LIVES!... But where was God?” Hayagrīva read dramatically to an enthralled group...

A full-page ad in *The New York Times*, offering a reward for information leading to the discovery of the whereabouts of God, and signed by Martin Luther King and Ronald Reagan, brought no response. People began to worry and wonder again. “God,” said some people, “lives in a sugar cube.” Others whispered that the sacred secret was in a cigarette.

But while all this was going on, an old man, one year past his allotted three score and ten, wandered into New York's East Village and set about to prove to the world that he knew where God could be found. In only three months, the man, Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta, succeeded in convincing the world's toughest audience—Bohemians, acidheads, potheads, and hippies—that he knew the way to God: Turn Off, Sing Out, and Fall In. This new brand of holy man, with all due deference to Dr. Leary, has come forth with a brand of “Consciousness Expansion” that's sweeter than acid, cheaper than pot, and nonbustible by fuzz. How is all this possible? “Through Krishna,” the Swami says.

The boys broke into cheers and applause. Acyutānanda apologized to Swamiji for the language of the article: “It's a hippie newspaper.”

“That's all right,” said Prabhupāda. “He has written it in his own way. But he has said that we are giving God. They are saying that God is dead. But it is false. We are directly presenting, ‘Here is God.’ Who can deny it? So many theologians and people may say there is no God, but the Vaiṣṇava hands God over to you freely, as a commodity: ‘Here is God.’ So he has marked this. It is very good. Save this paper. It is very important.”

The article was long. “For the cynical New Yorker,” it said, “living, visible, tangible proof can be found at 26 Second Avenue, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between seven and nine.” The article described the evening kīrtanas, quoted from Prabhupāda's lecture, and mentioned “a rhythmic, hypnotic sixteen-word chant, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, sung for hours on end to the accompaniment of hand clapping, cymbals, and bells.” Swamiji said that simply because the mantra was there, the article was perfect.

The article also included testimony from the Swami's disciples:

I started chanting to myself, like the Swami said, when I was walking down the street—Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare—over and over, and suddenly everything started looking so beautiful, the kids, the old men and women... even the creeps looked beautiful... to say nothing of the trees and flowers. It was like I had taken a dozen doses of LSD. But I knew there was a difference. There's no coming down from this. I can always do this any time, anywhere. It is always with you.

Without sarcasm, the article referred to the Swami's discipline forbidding coffee, tea, meat, eggs, and cigarettes, “to say nothing of marijuana, LSD, alcohol, and illicit sex.” Obviously the author admired Swamiji: “the energetic old man, a leading exponent of the philosophy of Personalism,

which holds that the one God is a person but that His form is spiritual." The article ended with a hint that Tompkins Square Park would see similar spiritual happenings each weekend: "There in the shadow of Hoving's Hill, God lives in a trancelike dance and chant."

* * *

October 12

It was to be a "Love-Pageant-Rally," marking California's new law prohibiting the possession of LSD. The rally's promoters urged everyone to come to Tompkins Square Park in elaborate dress. Although the devotees had nothing to do with LSD laws, they took the rally as another opportunity to popularize the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. So they went, with the Swami's blessings, carrying finger cymbals and a homemade tambourine.

The devotees looked plain in their dark jeans and lightweight zippered jackets. All around them, the dress was extravagant—tie-dyed shirts, tie-bleached jeans, period costumes, painted faces. There was even a circus clown. Tuli Kupferberg of the Fugs rock band carried an American flag with the stars rearranged to spell L-O-V-E. But so far the rally had been a dud—just a strange set of drugged young people milling near the large tree where Swamiji had chanted and spoken just a few days before.

Swamiji's boys made their way through the crowd to a central spot and started chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. A crowd pressed in close around them. Everyone seemed to be in friendly spirits—just unorganized, without any purpose. The idea behind the rally had been to show love and a pageant of LSD vision, but not much had been happening. Someone was walking around with a bucket of burning incense. Some hippies sat back on the park benches, watching everything through colored glasses. But the kīrtana was attractive, and soon a crowd gathered around the boys as they chanted.

Kīrtanānanda, his shaved head covered with a knit skullcap, stood beside tall Jagannātha, who, with his dark-framed glasses and wavy hair, looked like a great horned owl playing hand cymbals, Umāpati, also playing hand cymbals, looked thoughtful. Brahmānanda sat on the ground in front of them, his eyes closed and his mouth widely open, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Beside him and looking moody sat Raphael, and next to him, ascetically thin-faced Ravindra Svarūpa. Close by, a policeman stood watching.

The hippies began to pick up the chanting. They had come together, but there had been no center, no lecture, no amplified music. But now they began clapping and swaying, getting into the chanting as if it were their single purpose. The chanting grew stronger, and after an hour the group broke into a spontaneous dance. Joining hands and singing out, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare," they skipped and danced together, circling the tree and Swamiji's disciples. To the hippies, it was in fact a Love-Pageant-Rally, and they had found the love and peace they were searching for—it was in this mantra. Hare Kṛṣṇa had become their anthem, their reason for coming together, the life of the Love-Pageant-Rally. They didn't know exactly what the mantra was, but they accepted it as something deep within the soul, a metaphysical vibration—they tuned in to it. Even the clown began chanting and dancing. Only the policeman remained aloof and sober, though he also could see that the new demonstration would

be a peaceful one. The dance continued, and only the impending dusk brought the Love-Pageant-Rally to a close.

The devotees hurried back to Swamiji to tell him all that had happened. He had been sitting at his desk, translating the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Although he had not been physically present at the kīrtana, his disciples had acted on his instruction. So even without leaving his room, he was spreading the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Now he sat waiting for the report.

They burst into his room with shining eyes, flushed faces, and hoarse voices, relating the good news. Not only had they dutifully chanted, but hundreds of people had joined them and sung and danced in a big circle, in a spirit of unity. "Swamiji, you should have seen," Brahmānanda exclaimed, his voice now exhausted from chanting. "It was fantastic, fantastic!" Prabhupāda looked from one face to another, and he also became like them, elated and hopeful that the chanting could go on like this. They had proved that their chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa could lead the love and peace movement. It could grow, and hundreds could take part. "It is up to you to spread this chanting," Swamiji told them. "I am an old man, but you are young, and you can do it."

October 13

The Village Voice ran four large photographs of the Love-Pageant Rally. The article stated:

The backbone of the celebration was the mantras, holy chants from the Sanskrit Bhagavad Gītā, and for three hours it became like a boat on a sea of rhythmic chanting. Led by fifteen disciples of Bhaktivedanta Swami, who operates from a storefront on Second Avenue, the mantras ebbed and flowed with the rhythm of drums, flutes, and soda-cap tambourines.

October 18

It was Sunday. And again they went to Tompkins Square Park. Swamiji played the bongo as before, striking the drumhead deftly as ever, his nimble fingers creating drum rolls, as he sat on the rug in the autumn afternoon. His authentic, melodic voice recited the prayers to the previous spiritual masters: Bhaktivinoda, Gaurakiśora, Bhaktisiddhānta—the centuries-old disciplic succession of which he was the living representative, now in the 1960s, in this remote part of the world. He sang their names in duty, deference, and love, as their servant. He sat surrounded by his American followers under the tall oak tree amid the mazelike fences of the park.

And the same magic occurred. This time the hippies came by with more ease and familiarity. Allen Ginsberg came again, and a hundred others gathered as Prabhupāda loudly sang: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Of the hundreds who came by, some stayed briefly and then left, some decided to listen and chant for a few minutes or even for the entire afternoon. And a few—very few—marked their encounter with the Swami as an unforgettable change in their lives.

Bob Corens was looking for the Swami. He was walking with his stylishly dressed wife and two-year-old son, Eric. Bob was twenty-six years old and worked as a supervisor in the New York City

Welfare Department. He had grown up in Washington, D.C., where he had met his wife. He had a full face and broad forehead, a clear voice and steady eyes.

Bob: After I graduated from George Washington University, I decided to go straight to what I thought was the heart of the material world, New York City, to seek out whatever was the highest truth. I ended up living around the corner from the first East Village head shop.

Bob didn't think his job as a social worker really helped anyone—his clients over the years seemed to maintain their same outlook and habits. He and his wife frequented West Village coffee houses, had attended lectures by Leary and Alpert on expanded consciousness, and had taken part in a recent peace march. Bob had come to feel that his aspirations for a master's degree and a better apartment were unfulfilling, and he was looking for something more.

Bob: I heard about the I Ching, a book that was supposed to chart a person's course in life. So I got someone to do a reading for me. The direction was, "Push upward through darkness." I took it as a good sign, a spiritual sign. Then I purchased *The East Village Other*, and I saw the article entitled "Save Earth Now!!" There was a picture of the Swami. I had read in a book by a Sikh teacher that there could be no higher knowledge without a spiritual master.

Every morning on his way to work, Bob used to pass by the Swami's storefront. Curious, he stopped once and peered in the window, only to find an empty room, with some straw mats on the floor and one of Swamiji's boys. "Oh, these people are Buddhists?" he thought. The door had been open, and the boy came over and invited him in. "No thanks," he said, thinking, "I don't want anything to do with Buddhism." And he went on to his job.

In a head shop one day, he had picked up one of the Swami's Bhāgavatams and looked through it, but he thought it was too advanced, so he put it back down. After he read the article in *The East Village Other*, his interest increased. He thought that today might be the last Sunday of chanting in the park before the cold weather came. And so he went to the park hoping to find the Swami and his chanters. His wife was beside him, pushing Eric in a stroller, when he heard the ching-ching of the hand cymbals and a chorus of rhythmic chanting from the south side of the park. Thinking it must be the Swami, he followed the sound, while his wife took Eric to play on the swings. Alone now, Bob drew closer, moving into the crowd until he could see the kīrtana party and the Swami sitting under the tree. Bob stood among a crowd of hundreds, unnoticed.

"Everything is happening because of me," thought nineteen-year-old Judy Koslofsky. "Everything I see is my own creation, and I am the Supreme. Everything is mine." As the thought of being God obsessed her, Judy forgot her father and everything else. She was confused: "If I am God, why can't I control everything, and why am I so fearful on LSD?"

Judy was a student at the City College of New York, majoring in art and history. She was taking guitar lessons from the Reverend Garry Davis, the blues singer and Christian preacher, who was teaching her the art of sad soul music. Today, however, under the influence of LSD, she had the overwhelming impression that she was God. She'd had a fight with her father, who seemed cold and distant to her and couldn't understand her, and she had left her parents' home in the Bronx and traveled downtown. She was going to visit a girl friend, and Tompkins Square Park happened

to be on the way. When she reached the park the kīrtana was going on, but she couldn't see much because of the crowd. She weaved her way in closer until she could see some men—one shavenheaded, several bearded—dancing with upraised hands. And in the center she saw the Swami sitting on the rug, playing his drum.

Dan Clark was twenty-five, thin, intense, horn-rim bespectacled—an avant-garde filmmaker, and his first film was entitled *Rebirth*. He was a conscientious objector to the Vietnam war and was working at a home for children as alternative governmental service. He had been a member of the SDS and the War Resisters League. He had been arrested during a protest demonstration, and he had been suspended one week from his job for wearing a peace button and a black armband. He was into Buddhism, but he had lately been adding “a little psychedelic seasoning.” “Everything is nothing, and nothing is everything,” was his slogan, and he would go around chanting it like a mantra. But he was feeling that, at least psychologically, he needed a devotional tonic; his voidistic meditation was getting stale.

Dan had come to the park today looking for the Swami and the chanting he had read about in *The East Village Other*. He had seen the Swami before, one evening a few months back. He had been waiting for a bus across the street from the Swami's storefront—he was on the way to a rehearsal for a mixed-media show, and his friend had gone into Sam's Luncheonette for a moment—when he noticed that in the storefront an orange-robed Indian man with a shaved head was lecturing to a small group of young people.

Dan: When I saw him, I imagined myself walking across the street, going into the storefront, sitting down, and renouncing all worldly connections. But I thought to myself, “It's only my imagination. After all, I'm married, and I'm on my way to rehearsal, and I don't know anything about the Swami anyway.” So my friend and I got on the bus.

But Dan lived only a few blocks away from the storefront, and now and then he would pass by. Once, he had stood for several minutes on the sidewalk looking at the cover of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* taped onto the window.

Dan: It showed an oval lotus with planets around it, and right then I was introduced to the idea of spiritual sensuality. And when I saw the painting of Lord Caitanya and His associates in the window, that really threw me. I thought, “Yes, this is what I need—juice.”

Dan and his wife walked the paved pathway through the park. He was looking around for the Swami, but he didn't really know what to look for. He expected to see robes and hear Buddhist-style chanting, but he couldn't find anything. He had given up his search and was wandering around to see what musicians were there when he noticed a big crowd gathered around what he figured must have been some musicians. He was attracted by the beat of their music, a chiming one-two-three, one-two-three, a simple rhythm with a kind of flamboyance—and very magnetic. He saw an occasional upraised arm above the crowd, and he thought there must be flamenco dancing going on inside the circle. He then got wind of a drifting melody—certainly not flamenco—which accompanied the beat, and this attracted him further. He approached closer and closer, making his way through the crowd. Then he saw people chanting and others dancing and waving their arms in what he took to be a blend of American Indian and Asian dancing. It looked like something from a

long-forgotten era. Dan decided that this must be the Hare Kṛṣṇa group. But there were no robes, just the regular dress of the Lower East Side. And where was the Swami? Then he saw him, sitting, inconspicuous, playing a little drum. His eyes were closed, and his brow was knit with concentration.

Dan: The Swami wasn't calling attention to himself, and at first I didn't attribute any importance to an elderly Indian man's sitting off to one side. He didn't seem to have any special function in the chanting. But it gradually dawned on me who he was. He was the same Swami I had read about in the paper and seen in the storefront.

After a while he spoke, but I couldn't hear him. Still, I was impressed that he was a very modest person, not interested in getting himself up on a pedestal. He didn't go strutting around, but was still with inner peace, strength, and knowledge.

Bob: All his disciples were there around his feet. They were chanting, and I tried to chant along and learn the mantra too. I had heard the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa once before, at a peace march, and I had found it very beautiful. Then the Swami spoke. I had the impression that this person was not earthly, and I thought, "Here is the person I'm looking for." He seemed to be different from anyone else, like he came from some other place or universe. I was attracted.

After a second kīrtana, the Swami and his followers rolled up their rug, picked up their instruments, and began to leave.

Bob walked back to the swings on the other side of the park to find his wife and child, but the image of the Swami stayed with him—"He seemed different from anyone else." His accent had been thick, yet Bob resolved to go to the storefront in a few days to hear him speak. "Here is a leader," thought Bob.

Dan and his wife sauntered off into the park, sampling the various groups of musicians. His wife was surprised that Dan, who was usually shy, had danced at the kīrtana. He said he might go over to the storefront one day and hear the Swami speak.

Judy just stood there hallucinating. She held a Stay High Forever pamphlet in her hand and read it over and over and over. While she was thinking the whole event must have come from another planet, a man walked up and asked, "Would you like to go to where the Swami is?" She nodded.

At the storefront, one of the devotees offered Judy some prasādam—a capātī—and then invited her up to the Swami's room. Upstairs, she entered the large front room, which was filled with fragrant smoke. There were tall flower vases, and sesame seeds were on the floor. She saw the Swami bow before the little picture of Lord Caitanya and His associates and then stand and leave the room, closing the door behind him. Judy decided that he must have been bowing to the floor itself. Around her, everyone was softly chanting on beads, and although she couldn't make out the words, it seemed peaceful. One of the Swami's disciples told her she could come into the back room, and she followed, curious. The Swami was sitting there on his mat, looking effulgent. There were about ten other people in the room.

Prabhupāda asked her if she liked the chanting in the park, and she replied, "I loved it."

"Do you live near here?" he asked.

Judy flashed on her idea that she was the all-pervading Truth and answered in a way which she thought must have sounded very mystical. "Oh, I live veeerrry near."

"Good," said Swamiji, "then you can come for our morning kīrtana and class."

Then she realized that she didn't live so near and that it would mean traveling an hour and a half from the Bronx to visit the Swami. But she decided that since he had asked her, she would come. Then she thought, "I am making this up." But Prabhupāda assured her, as if knowing her thoughts, "This process is nothing you have made up. It is very old, very simple, and sublime." He leaned back. "We are eternal," he said, "and everything around us is temporary." Judy was now coming down from the LSD. By the time she left the Swami it was late. She had wanted to stay overnight, but the boys hadn't allowed her. But she was determined to join.

For Bob, it seemed natural to follow up on what he had seen in the park. He began attending the evening classes, and he started reading the Bhāgavatam at home and chanting. He framed the picture from the Bhāgavatam dust jacket depicting the spiritual sky and placed it on his small homemade altar. He would offer flowers before the picture and sit before it chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Bob was fascinated by the philosophy and the books and classes, and from the very beginning he was amazed that Swamiji's teachings answered all his questions. He listened carefully and accepted: "It seemed like once I'd decided that he was telling the truth, I just accepted everything he said. Not that part of it was the truth and the rest of it I would have to think about."

October 19

It was Monday evening, after the Sunday kīrtana in the park, and Dan arrived at the storefront for kīrtana. The kīrtana was in full swing, and when he entered, the first thing he noticed was some people playing on the innards of an upright piano leaning against the wall near the door. A boy handed him some wooden sticks, and he sat down and joined in the kīrtana. Then came the Swami's lecture, which Dan thought was long and serious, about how sexual desire causes bondage and suffering. The temple was crowded and stuffy, and Dan was shocked by the lecture, but he stayed on because he knew there would be another kīrtana. He felt uneasy that the Swami's followers were all celibate, but because he liked the kīrtanas, he resolved to keep coming.

The Swami wasn't quite what Dan had expected. He had imagined something of a lighthearted Zen roshi, laughing and joking, with sparkling eyes and words filled with paradoxes. But he found the Swami just the opposite—very straightforward and even cutting in his speech and his mouth turned down at the corners, making him look mournful. Dan happily took to the kīrtanas, thinking they would aid his impersonal meditation, but the lectures kept stressing that God was a person. Dan resisted. He mentally debated with Prabhupāda. He was partial to Dr. Radhakrishnan's interpretation of the Gītā, and yet the Swami often launched ruthless attacks against such

impersonal ideas. Gradually, Dan saw his impersonal barrier crumble, and he came to admit that on every count the Swami was right.

Judy began attending both the morning and evening classes. She had to rise by five o'clock to get to the storefront on time, and her mother and father protested. But Judy didn't care. She would ride an hour and a half on the subway, before dawn, downtown to the Swami's meetings, where she would be the only girl present.

When the Swami heard that Judy was an art student, he asked her to paint for Kṛṣṇa. She set up a canvas in the front room of the apartment, and under his guidance she began painting. For her first assignment, he asked her to paint a portrait of his Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He gave her a photo and instructed her: There should be a flower garland around Guru Mahārāja's neck, the tilaka should be yellowish, not white, and there should be no effulgence or halo around his head.

Bob: I began chanting and studying the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam at home and attending the kīrtana and classes at the storefront. After the last kīrtana in the evening, the Swami would take a bowl made of simulated wood and a little paring knife and a couple of apples that had been sitting on the edge of his lectern, and he would cut the apples up in the little bowl and hand the bowl to a disciple. The disciple would then offer him the first piece, and he would pop it into his mouth. The rest of the pieces of apple would be distributed to the crowd. I remember one time when he was chewing on his piece of apple and he spit the seeds out on the floor up against the wall. They bounced off the wall onto the floor next to the dais. And I was thinking, "How wonderful. No one else can do that. No one else would have the nerve to do such a thing."

With his aesthetic filmmaker's eye, Dan appreciated Swamiji's manner.

Dan: There was a sink right next to the dais where he sat. It was so close that he could have leaned over and touched it. After cutting up an apple, he would take the scraps and just fling them into the sink. It was very casual. I was very impressed by that.

And one time Brahmānanda came up and wanted fifty cents for something, and the Swami reached down and picked up his little black purse—the kind that closes by a metal clasp at the top. He snapped it open, looked inside very perspicaciously, and then his hand came up like a bird, like an eagle hovering in flight above its prey. But the hand didn't pounce. It just delicately drifted down, took out a fifty-cent piece, and rose up again as if it were being lifted up on a balloon. It was graceful. It was a dance, a ballet. He just picked up this fifty-cent piece and lifted it into Brahmānanda's hand. I couldn't believe it. Someone asks you for a fifty-cent piece, you just dig in your pockets and throw it at them. But the Swami seemed to treat everything as Kṛṣṇa's property, and this fifty-cent piece was treated with such care.

The weeks went by. Some of the devotees had spoken to Bob about initiation, but he was unsure. He didn't know exactly what initiation was, but it seemed to him that the other devotees were eager to get him initiated because he was working and had a family. To Bob's way of thinking, he represented maturity to them, a middle-class American, and they were eager to land him. Bob's wife

wasn't interested, and his friends were downright opposed. He couldn't spend much time with Prabhupāda or the devotees, since he was either at the office or at home with his family.

Bob: So they were asking me if I was interested in initiation. I said I would think about it. I hadn't stopped smoking. I hadn't made the final decision.

The first real personal exchange I had with the Swami was when I asked for initiation. The rest of the time I was so much in awe of him that it didn't occur to me to say anything. I always wanted to. I felt puffed up, and I always thought, "Well, I should be able to talk to him. Maybe I should do something." But I was always kind of reluctant to do it. I didn't think it was my place. I guess maybe I was afraid. But I was getting up early and chanting thirty-two rounds a day, many of them on the subway. I was afraid of the material world because I didn't have much association with devotees, and I wanted to insulate myself by chanting more.

Judy was another person who was considering initiation, and I asked her what she was going to do about it, and she said, "I'm thinking about it." And then she told me she had decided she would get initiated and give up all her bad habits. I began to think maybe I could give up these things too, so I asked what to do—how do I approach him? And Kīrtanānanda said, "Well, you go up to his room." I was surprised it was so easy.

I had prepared a little speech in my mind—"My dear Swamiji, would you kindly accept me as your disciple and teach me about Kṛṣṇa consciousness?" I went up to his room, without an appointment, and knocked on the door. I heard him say, "Come in." I entered the room, and he was sitting behind his desk. He was alone. I made obeisances, and he looked at me and said, "Yes?" And I said, "Swamiji, will you make me your disciple?" and that's as far as I got. I was going to say, "and teach me the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness." But he didn't let me finish my speech. He said, "Yes." It was so simple. I thought, "Well, there's nothing else to say. He has accepted me.." So I thanked him and paid my obeisances and left.

"You know you're not supposed to be up here unless you're initiated," Acyutānanda said.

Judy was flustered. She had come upstairs to put some dirty pots in the kitchen. "Oh, yes," she replied, "that's just what I wanted to talk to Swamiji about." And she went into Prabhupāda's room, where he was talking with a few other people.

"Swamiji, could I please get initiated?" she asked.

And he said, "Do you know the four rules?"

"Yes."

"Can you follow them?"

"Yes."

"Then you can be initiated in two weeks."

Dan was also thinking about initiation, but he wanted to wait. He was chanting sixteen rounds and attending all the classes, despite his reluctant wife. He had always had difficulty with authority figures, but he could feel that the Swami was winning him over and wearing down his impersonal barrier.

Two weeks later, Prabhupāda held another initiation ceremony. Bob became Rūpānuga and Judy became Jadurāṇī. Dan needed a little more time.

SPL 21: Beyond the Lower East Side

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Beyond the Lower East Side

But we were shocked that he was going to leave. I never thought that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would go beyond the Lower East Side, what to speak of New York City. I thought that this was it, and it would stay here eternally.

—Brahmānanda

Hare Kṛṣṇa was becoming popular—regular kīrtanas in the park, newspaper coverage. Hayagrīva called it “the Hare Kṛṣṇa explosion.” The Lower East Side hippies considered the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa “one of the grooviest things happening,” and that the Swami's disciples didn't take LSD didn't seem to affect their popularity. The devotees were accepted as angelic people, carrying the peaceful chanting to others and offering free food and a free place to stay. You could get the most interesting vegetarian food free at their place (if you went at the right time). And in their storefront, on the shelf by the door, were books from India.

In the clubs, local musicians played the melody that they had picked up from the Swami when he chanted in the park and at the temple. The Lower East Side was a neighborhood of artists and musicians, and now it was also the neighborhood of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Burton Green: Musicians were influenced by it—the Kṛṣṇa chant, Govinda jaya jaya, and other chants. I used some of those chants when I recorded. A lot of musicians reached out for this in different ways. We would explode in a short time and blow off, but then keep the chant underneath as a basis. A lot of people found that spiritual vibration even in the midst of the heavy music they were doing. They were becoming devotee-musicians.

Evening kīrtanas were always big. Brahmānanda used to stand by the back door every night and watch the room fill up until there was no place left to sit. There was a lot of interest in the group chanting and music making, but after the kīrtana, when the talk was to begin, people would start to leave. It was not uncommon for half the audience to leave before the talk began, and sometimes people would leave in the middle of the lecture.

One evening, Allen Ginsberg brought Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg of the Fugs to the meeting. The Fugs, a local group that had made a name for themselves, specialized in obscene lyrics. Among the popular songs of Ed Sanders were "Slum Goddess of the Lower East Side," "Group Grope," and "I Can't Get High." Ed had wild red hair and an electric-red beard, and he played a guitar during the kīrtana. The devotees were happy to see their prestigious guests. The night of the Fugs, however, Prabhupāda chose to speak on the illusion of sexual pleasure. "Sex pleasure binds us to this material world birth after birth," he said, and he quoted, as he often did, a verse of Yāmunācārya: "Since I have become Kṛṣṇa conscious, whenever I think of sex life with a woman my face at once turns from it, and I spit at the thought." The Fugs never returned.

To speak ill of sexual pleasure was certainly not a strategic move for one who wanted to create followers among the Lower East Side hippies. But Prabhupāda never considered changing his message. In fact, when Umāpati had mentioned that Americans didn't like to hear that sex was only for conceiving children, Prabhupāda had replied, "I cannot change the philosophy to please the Americans."

"What about sex?" asked the ISKCON attorney, Steve Goldsmith, one evening, speaking out from the rear of the crowded temple.

"Sex should only be with one's wife," Prabhupāda said, "and that is also restricted. Sex is for the propagation of Kṛṣṇa conscious children. My spiritual master used to say that to beget Kṛṣṇa conscious children he was prepared to have sex a hundred times. Of course, that is most difficult in this age. Therefore, he remained a brahmacārī."

"But sex is a very strong force," Mr. Goldsmith challenged. "What a man feels for a woman is undeniable."

"Therefore in every culture there is the institution of marriage," Prabhupāda replied. "You can get yourself married and live peacefully with one woman, but the wife should not be used as a machine for sense gratification. Sex should be restricted to once a month and only for the propagation of children."

Hayagrīva, who was seated just to Swamiji's left, beside the large, dangling cymbal, spoke out suddenly. "Only once a month?" And with a touch of facetious humor he added loudly, "Better to forget the whole thing!"

"Yes! That's it! Very good boy." Swamiji laughed, and others joined him. "It is best not to think of it. Best just to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." And he held up his hands as if he were chanting on a strand of beads. "That way we will be saved from so much botheration. Sex is like the itching sensation, that's all. And as when we scratch, it gets worse, so we should tolerate the itching and ask Kṛṣṇa to help us. It is not easy. Sex is the highest pleasure in the material world, and it is also the greatest bondage."

But Steve Goldsmith was shaking his head. Prabhupāda looked at him, smiling: "There is still a problem?"

"It's just that... well, it's been proved dangerous to repress the sex drive. There's a theory that we have wars because—"

"People are eating meat," Prabhupāda interrupted. "As long as people eat meat, there will be war. And if a man eats meat, he will be sure to have illicit sex also."

Steve Goldsmith was an influential friend and supporter of ISKCON. But Prabhupāda would not change the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness "to please the Americans."

* * *

Judson Hall, on West Fifty-seventh Street, cost two hundred dollars to rent for one night. Rāya Rāma thought it was time Swamiji tried reaching some of the more sophisticated New Yorkers, and since Judson Hall was near Carnegie Hall and sometimes had interesting concerts and lectures, he thought it would be a good place to start. Swamiji agreed to the idea, and Rāya Rāma printed an announcement, which he distributed in the midtown bookstores. On the night of the event the devotees paraded through the midtown entertainment areas, beating a bass drum and handing out leaflets. Then they returned to Judson Hall for the program. Only seven people attended.

The devotees felt terrible—they had misled Swamiji and spent the equivalent of a month's rent. "We can cancel the program if you like, Swamiji," Rāya Rāma said. But Prabhupāda replied, "No, let us chant and speak." So the devotees took the stage and chanted with Swamiji and danced, and then sat beside him as he lectured, his voice echoing through the empty hall. Afterward, Swamiji called for questions, and a young man, about fifteen vacant rows back, asked whether he was correct in understanding that the Swami's philosophy was primarily for reforming destitute young people.

"No," Prabhupāda replied. "Everyone in this material world is lost and destitute, even the so-called successful person, because everyone has forgotten Kṛṣṇa."

After the program, Swamiji sat in a chair by the exit as the few members of the audience were leaving. A respectable-looking couple introduced themselves, and Swamiji sat up very straight with folded palms and smiled. Brahmānanda's mother was present, and Swamiji was very cordial toward her. But in general the devotees were depressed at the small turnout. "I'm sorry, Swamiji. We invited you here and almost no one came," Rāya Rāma apologized. But Prabhupāda raised his eyebrows and said, "No one? You did not see Nārada? You did not see Lord Brahmā? When there is chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, even the demigods come to participate."

Back at the temple, Prabhupāda chided Rāya Rāma: "I told you we should have charged money. When something is free, people think it is worthless. But just charge three dollars or five dollars, and people will think, 'Oh, you are offering some very valuable thing.' In Bengal there is the story of a man who went house to house offering free mangoes. And no one would take his mangoes, because everyone thought, 'Oh, why is he giving away these mangoes? There must be something wrong with them.' So he charged three rupees, and then they thought, 'These look like good mangoes. The price is only three rupees—all right.' So, when people see that something is free, they think it is worthless. Charge them some money, and they will think it is very nice."

* * *

Burton Green was a musician, fond of the Swami and fond of banging on the innards of the piano in the temple during kīrtana.

Burton Green: We had a really explosive thing to break out of, with this capitalistic, materialistic egg sitting on us. So there was so much ferocity in the music to break out of. But spinning out like that, you could have a nervous breakdown. So it was great to go to the Swami's and chant in his small storefront on Second Avenue. The streets were full of māyā and perversion—and his was a place to really mellow out. It was great to chant there, to balance my life. It was great to sit and have prasādam with the Swami and get some real authentic Indian cooking and capātis and talk about things, especially when I had very little money in my pocket. It was always nice to go.

When Burton asked Prabhupāda to attend his piano recital at Town Hall Theater, Prabhupāda agreed.

Brahmānanda: About seven or eight of us in our sneakers and jeans had ridden on the subway with Swamiji to Town Hall. We went in and took our seats, and the concert began. Burton Green came out, opened the piano top, took a hammer, and began wildly hitting on the strings inside the piano. And it went on for an hour and a half. We were all sitting there with Swamiji, and we all began chanting on our beads. There were only about two dozen people in the whole theater.

Then the intermission came, and Swamiji wanted to go to the toilet room, and I went along and helped him—turning on the water in the sink, getting a paper towel for him. Doing these little services for Swamiji seemed like the perfection of my life. There was something so great about him that just doing those things was my perfection. And I felt like I was protecting him, like I was his personal bodyguard. Coming up on the subway, I had shown him how the subway worked and answered his questions. It all seemed very intimate.

Anyway, we went back upstairs to our seats, and Burton Green came right up to Swamiji saying, "Swamiji, are you happy? Are you comfortable? Do you like it?" And Swamiji was very polite and said yes. Then Burton said, "Now the second part is coming." I interrupted and tried to say that Swamiji is very tired and he takes rest at ten. It was already after ten, so I said we had to go back. But he pressed Swamiji to stay for the second half, and so we had to stay.

Then the poets came out and recited poetry. We were there until eleven-thirty, and then we had to ride back on the subway. But a few weeks later I learned that Prabhupāda had another reason for going to Town Hall—he was thinking of renting it for a temple, and he wanted to see it.

* * *

The Gate Theater was a small auditorium on Second Avenue about ten blocks north of the storefront.

Satsvarūpa: We rented the Gate Theater for one night. It was a dark place, painted all black. The theater was almost empty. We had an easel on stage with a painting of the Pañca-tattva. Swamiji spoke, and his talk became very technical. Pointing and referring back to the painting, he described each member of the Pañca-tattva. He first explained that Lord Caitanya is the Supreme Personality of Godhead appearing as a pure devotee. Lord Nityānanda, to the right of Lord Caitanya, is His first expansion, and to the right of Lord Nityānanda is Advaita, who is the incarnation of the Supreme Lord. To the left of Lord Caitanya, he said, is Gadādhara, the internal energy, and Śrīvāsa is the perfect devotee.

During the talk, I was thinking that this was maybe too elevated for the audience. But I was sitting close beside Swamiji, and like the other devotees I was really enjoying being with him.

After the Gate engagement, Swamiji and his disciples agreed that it was a waste of time trying to rent theaters. It was better to go to Tompkins Square Park. That was the best place for attracting people, and it didn't cost anything.

* * *

It was 11:00 P.M., and only one light was on in Swamiji's apartment—in the kitchenette. Swamiji was staying up, teaching Kīrtanānanda and Brahmānanda how to cook, because the next day (Sunday) they would be holding a feast for the public. Kīrtanānanda had suggested it be advertised as a "Love Feast," and Swamiji had adopted the name, although some thought it sounded strange at first to hear him say "Love Feast." The devotees had put up posters around the neighborhood and had made a sign for the window of the storefront, and Swamiji had said he would cook enough for at least fifty people. He said the Love Feasts should become an important part of ISKCON. As he had explained many times, food offered to Kṛṣṇa becomes spiritual, and whoever eats the prasādam receives great spiritual benefit. Prasādam meant "mercy."

His two helpers stood respectfully beside him, sometimes stepping back out of his way as he moved and sometimes looking over his shoulder as he mixed spices or set a pan over the flame or called for another ingredient. He was stirring a big pot of sweet rice with a wooden spoon—it had to be stirred constantly—and slowly adding milk. If the sweet rice burned, it would be ruined, he said, and he handed the spoon to Kīrtanānanda. He next showed them how to make ghee by heating butter in a wok and separating the milk solids from the butterfat. And he simultaneously taught them how to make apple chutney.

Prabhupāda was silent as he cooked. But when Brahmānanda asked him how he had learned so much about cooking, Prabhupāda said that he had learned by watching his mother. He laughed and said it had not been like it is in the West, where you take a lump of flesh from your refrigerator, throw it in a pan, boil it, sprinkle it with salt, and then eat like an animal. And in Korea, he said, they eat dogs. But human beings should eat grains, fruits, vegetables, and milk; and the cow, especially, should not be killed.

While Brahmānanda cut the apples for the chutney and put them in a pot for steaming and Kīrtanānanda stirred the sweet rice, Swamiji prepared masāla—the basic mixture of spices—which he would soon add to the steaming apples. The familiar smell of red pepper and cumin seeds

entered their nostrils sharply as the masāla crackled and smoked in the hot ghee in the tiny frying pan. With three separate operations going at once—sweet rice, steaming apples, and masāla—Prabhupāda cautioned Kīrtanānanda to stir the sweet rice steadily and scrape the bottom of the pot, and he took the spoon for a moment from Kīrtanānanda's hand and demonstrated how to stir it properly. Sweet rice, chutney, and certain other dishes could be made in advance of the feast, he explained, but many things would have to be done the next morning.

Prabhupāda rose early, despite having kept late hours the night before, and after the morning class he was back in the kitchen. Now, half a dozen disciples sat in his front room making dough for purīs and samosās. He had shown them how to make the dough, and Umāpati had kneaded for a while by pounding the soft dough with his fists. But Brahmānanda was better at it, socking the weight of his wrestler's body onto the large lump of dough.

As Swamiji entered the room to examine the quality of the puris, his disciples looked up at him respectfully. They were always serious when he was present. He picked up a purī and examined it. "It is not to the standard," he said, "but it will have to do." Then, amid crumpled rejects and oddly shaped pieces of dough, he squatted down beside his helpers, who were trying as best they could, though making a mess. He took a small ball of dough, pressed it flat with his fingers, and then deftly rolled it out until it curled around the wooden pin and then fell off—a perfectly round purī. He held it up, displaying a translucent, thin (but not too thin) patty of dough. "Make them like this," he said. "But hurry." On discovering that the dough was too stiff, Swamiji added a little ghee and then a little milk and kneaded the dough to a softer texture. "Everything should be just right," he said, and his disciples took to their menial tasks with concentrated earnestness. Who among them had ever heard of these things before—purīs and samosās? It was all new, and the challenge something very important; it was a part of devotional service.

Swamiji did much of the cooking as he simultaneously supervised his helpers. He was always near, walking barefoot back to the kitchen, then to the front room, then to his own room in the rear. And even when he went to his back room, his disciples could see him through the window in the wall.

Swamiji saw each of the nearly one dozen dishes through its final stages, and his disciples carried them into the front room in pots, one by one, and placed them before the picture of Lord Caitanya. There was halavā, dāl, two sabjīs, fancy rice, purīs, samosās, sweet rice, apple chutney, and gulābjāmuns, or sweetballs—ISKCON bullets. Prabhupāda had personally spent much time slowly deep-frying the sweetballs on a low heat, until they had turned golden brown and full. Then, one by one, he had lifted them out of the ghee with a slotted spoon and put them to soak in sugar syrup. He recognized that these golden, ghee fried milk balls soaked with sugar water were his disciples' favorite prasādam treat. He called them "ISKCON bullets" because they were weapons in the war against māyā. He even allowed that a jar of ISKCON bullets, floating in their syrup, be always on hand in the front room, where his disciples could take them without asking permission and without observing any regulated hours. They could take as many as they liked.

Kīrtanānanda brought in the samosā filling, which he had prepared from spinach and green peas cooked to a paste and which the Swami had heavily spiced. Stuffing the samosās was an art, and Swamiji showed them how to do it. He took a semicircle of dough, shaped it into a cone, stuffed it

with a spoonful of filling, and then folded the top over and sealed it—a samosā, ready for the hot ghee.

Acyutānanda carried the imperfectly shaped purīs into the kitchen, where he and Kīrtanānanda deep-fried them two at a time. If the temperature of the ghee, the consistency of the dough, and the size, shape, and thickness of the purīs were all just right, the purīs would cook in only a few seconds, rising to the surface of the ghee, where they would inflate like little balloons. The cooks then stood them on edge in a cardboard box to drain off the excess ghee.

As they completed the last preparations for the feast, Swamiji's disciples washed the stiff dough from their hands and went down to the storefront, where they set out the straw mats and awaited the guests and the feast. Upstairs, Swamiji and a couple of his cooks offered all the preparations to Lord Caitanya, reciting the paramparā prayer.

The first few Love Feasts were not very well attended, but the devotees were so enthusiastic about the feast prasādam that they showed no disappointment over the scarcity of guests. They were prepared to eat everything.

Satsvarūpa: There was something called “brāhmaṇa spaghetti,” which was rice-flour noodles cooked in ghee and soaked in sugar water. And there was halavā, puṣpānna rice with fried cheese balls, samosās, split mūṅg beans fried into crunchy pellets and mixed with salt and spices, purīs, gulābjāmuns. And everything was succulent—that was the word Hayagrīva used. “Yes,” he would say, expressing it waggishly, “everything was very succulent.”

Eating the feast was an intense experience. We were supposed to be subduing our senses all week, following strict regulations, controlling the tongue. And the feast was a kind of reward. Swamiji and Kṛṣṇa were giving us a taste of full spiritual ecstasy, even though we were still beginners and still in the material world. Before taking my plateful, I would pray, “Please let me remain in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because it is so nice and I am so fallen. Let me serve Swamiji, and let me now enjoy this feast in transcendental bliss.” And I would begin eating, going from one taste sensation to another—the good rice, the favorite vegetable, the bread, and saving the gulābjāmun for last, thinking, “I can have seconds, and if I like, thirds.” We would keep our eyes on the big pots, confident that there was as much as we wanted. It was a time of rededication. We all enjoyed with completely open relish and sense gratification. Eating was very important.

Gradually, attendance picked up. The feasts were free, and they were reputed to be delicious. Mostly local hippies came, but occasionally a higher class of experimenting New Yorkers or even the parents of one of the devotees would come. When the small temple was filled, guests would sit in the courtyard. They would take their prasādam-laden paper plates and their wooden spoons into the backyard garden and sit beneath the fire escape or at the picnic table or anywhere. And after eating, they would go back into the storefront for more. Devotees were stationed behind the pots of prasādam, and the guests would come by for seconds. The other tenants were not very happy about seeing the courtyard full of festive guests, and the devotees tried to pacify them by bringing them plates of prasādam. Although Swamiji would not go down to the temple, he would take a plate in his room and hear with pleasure about the success of his new program.

One time the devotees were eating so ravenously that they threatened to eat everything available before the guests had all been served, and Kīrtanānanda had to admonish them for their selfish attitude. Gradually, they were understanding that the Sunday feast was not just for their fun and pleasure but to bring people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

* * *

Prabhupāda had begun Back to Godhead magazine in India. Although he had been writing articles since the 1930s, it was in 1944, in Calcutta, that he had singlehandedly begun the magazine, in response to his spiritual master's request that he preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in English. It had been with great difficulty that through his pharmaceutical business he had managed to gather the four hundred rupees a month for printing. And he had singlehandedly written, edited, published, financed, and distributed each issue. In those early years, Back to Godhead had been Prabhupāda's major literary work and preaching mission. He had envisioned widespread distribution of the magazine, and he had thought of plans for spreading the message of Lord Caitanya all over the world. He had drawn up a list of major countries and the number of copies of Back to Godhead he wanted to send to each. He sought donations to finance this project, but help was scarce. Then, in 1959 he had turned his energies toward writing and publishing the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. But now he wanted to revive Back to Godhead, and this time it would not be done singlehandedly. This time he would give the responsibility to his disciples.

Greg Scharf, now Gargamuni since his recent initiation, found a press. A country club in Queens was trying to sell its small A.B. Dick press. Prabhupāda was interested, and he rode out to Queens in a borrowed van with Gargamuni and Kīrtanānanda to see the machine. It was old, but in good condition. The manager of the country club wanted \$250 for it. Prabhupāda looked over the machine carefully and talked with the manager, telling him of his spiritual mission. The manager mentioned a second press he had on hand and explained that neither machine was actually of any use to him. So Prabhupāda said he would pay \$250 for both machines; the country club did not really need them, and besides, the manager should help out, since Prabhupāda had an important spiritual message to print for the benefit of all humanity. The man agreed. Prabhupāda had Gargamuni and Kīrtanānanda load both machines into the van, and ISKCON had its printing press.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave over the editorship of Back to Godhead magazine to Hayagrīva and Rāya Rāma. For so many years he had taken Back to Godhead as his personal service to his spiritual master, but now he would let young men like Hayagrīva, the college English teacher, and Rāya Rāma, the professional writer, take up Back to Godhead magazine as their service to their spiritual master. In a short time, Hayagrīva and Rāya Rāma had compiled the first issue and were ready to print.

It was an off night—no public kīrtana and lecture—and Swamiji was up in his room working on his translation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Downstairs, the printing of the first issue had been going on for hours. Rāya Rāma had typed the stencils, and during the printing he had stood nervously over the machine, examining the printing quality of each page, stroking his beard, and murmuring, “Hmmmmmm.” Now it was time to collate and staple each magazine. The stencils had lasted for one hundred copies, and one hundred copies of each of the twenty-eight pages and the front and back covers were now lined up along two of the unvarnished benches Raphael had made that summer. A

few devotees collated and stapled the magazine in an assembly line, walking along the stacks of pages, taking one page under another until they reached the end of the bench and gave the assembled stack of pages to Gargamuni, who stood brushing his long hair out of his eyes, stapling each magazine with the stapler and staples Brahmānanda had brought from his Board of Education office. Even Hayagrīva, who usually didn't volunteer for menial duties, was there, walking down the line, collating.

Suddenly the side door opened, and to their surprise they saw Swamiji looking in at them. Then he opened the door wide and entered the room. He had never come down like this on an off night before. They felt an unexpected flush of emotion and love for him, and they dropped down on their knees, bowing their heads to the floor. "No, no," he said, raising his hand to stop them as some were still bowing and others already rising to their feet. "Continue what you are doing." When they stood up and saw him standing with them, they weren't sure what to do. But obviously he had come down to see them producing his Back to Godhead magazine, so they continued working, silently and efficiently. Prabhupāda walked down the row of pages, his hand and wrist extending gracefully from the folds of his shawl as he touched a stack of pages and then a finished magazine. "ISKCON Press," he said.

Jagannātha had designed the cover, using a pen-and-ink drawing of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa similar to his painting in the temple. It was a simple drawing set within a pattern of concentric circles. The first page opened with the same motto Prabhupāda had used for years on his Back to Godhead: "Godhead is light, nescience is darkness. Where there is God head there is no nescience." And on the same page, Hayagrīva had not been able to resist giving a quotation from William Blake, approved by Swamiji, which substantiated the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness:

God appears, and God is Light

To those poor souls who dwell in Night,

But does a Human Form display

To those who dwell in realms of Day.

Although the editorial spoke of Blake, Whitman, and Jesus Christ, it stressed:

... it is to teach this science [of devotion to God] that Swami Bhaktivedanta has come to America. His message is simple: the chanting of the Holy Name of God: "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare..."

Following the orders of his spiritual master, His Divine Grace Sri Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupad, Swami Bhaktivedanta began the initial publication of Back to Godhead in 1944. This bi-monthly, published from 1944 to 1956 in Vrindaban, India,... established Swami Bhaktivedanta as the leading Personalist in India. This issue marks the first publication of Back to Godhead in the West.

The main article, a summary of a lecture given by Prabhupāda, was based on notes taken by Umāpati.

It has been said that when we wake up and when we go to sleep, we should beat our mind a thousand times with a shoe. When the mind says things like, "Why sing 'Hare Krishna'? Why not take LSD?" we should beat it with the same shoe. However, if we always think of Krishna, no beating will be necessary. The mind will be our best friend.

And there was an article by Hayagrīva: "Flip Out and Stay." Hayagrīva had quoted liberally from Hart Crane and Walt Whitman.

No wonder so many young collegiates are trying to flip out permanently on superdrugs... Perhaps this is their way of saying, "We don't want any part of this hell you've made for yourselves." So they use psychedelics as a springboard to propel themselves into different realms... But the drug "flip" is only temporary. It is temporary because it is artificial... One really begins to wonder where all these "trips" are leading.

Havagriva concluded that kṛṣṇa-kīrtana is the quickest way to flip out without coming down.

Your associates will think you mad. That is the first sign of progress. Just let others be mad for māyā, the old ephemeral lures of women and gold... But [you] be mad instead for the Reality.

In the back of the magazine was an ad for Swamiji's essays, Krishna, the Reservoir of Pleasure and Who is Crazy? and a notice:

Soon to be printed:

Geetopanishad, or Bhagavad-gītā As It Is,

Translated and with commentaries by Swami Bhaktivedanta.

Prabhupāda's first and main instruction to his editors had been that they should produce the magazine regularly—every month. Even if they didn't know how to sell the copies or even if they only turned out two pages, they had to continue bearing the standard.

He called Hayagrīva to his room and presented him a complete three- volume set of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. On the front page of each volume he had written, "To Śrīmān Hayagriva das Brahmācari with my blessings, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." Hayagrīva was grateful and mentioned that he had not been able to afford them. "That's all right," Prabhupāda said. "Now you compile this Back to Godhead. Work sincerely, and make it as big as Time magazine."

Prabhupāda wanted all his disciples to take part in it. "Don't be dull," he said. "Write something." He wanted to give his disciples Back to Godhead for their own preaching. Brahmānanda and Gargamuni took the first issues out that same night on bicycles, riding to every head shop on the Lower East Side, all the way to Fourteenth Street and as far west as the West Village, until they had distributed all one hundred issues. This was an increase in the preaching. Now all his students

could take part in the work—typing, editing, writing, assembling, selling. It was his preaching, of course, but he wasn't alone any more.

* * *

“Over a short four months, the society has expanded sufficiently to warrant larger quarters than the small Second Avenue storefront temple,” stated the editorial in the second issue of *Back to Godhead*. Prabhupāda had not abandoned his idea for a big building in New York City. Greenwich Village real estate was too expensive, and midtown was out of the question, but Prabhupāda still said he wanted to buy a building. It was difficult for his followers to think of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as anything more than a Lower East Side movement, because who but the people of the Lower East Side would be interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness? And anyway, who had money to buy a building in Manhattan?

But one day, Ravindra Svarūpa had happened to meet someone—a wealthy Jewish heir who was sympathetic toward youth movements—who agreed to loan Swamiji five thousand dollars. Ravindra Svarūpa had arranged the loan, and Swamiji had designated the money as his building fund, to which he had gradually added another five thousand dollars that he had collected through incidental donations. But with suitable buildings starting at one hundred thousand dollars, even this sum seemed petty.

Swamiji went with Brahmānanda to look at a building on Sixth Street that had previously been the Jewish Providential Bank. It had a large lobby with a mezzanine, marble floors, and the atmosphere of a temple. Brahmānanda suggested that the vault area could be remodeled for use as a dormitory, and Swamiji considered the mezzanine for his own apartment. The large lobby, he said, could be used for kīrtanas and lectures. On leaving the building, however, Prabhupāda noted that it was located on the corner, by a bus stop. It would not be a good location. The Gaudiya Math branch at Bhag Bazaar in Calcutta, he said, was also located at a bus stop, and the noisy engines of the buses as they started up created a disturbance.

Prabhupāda next looked at the Temple Emanu-El, also on Sixth Street on the Lower East Side. It was even larger than the bank building, and when some of Swamiji's disciples walked through the cavernous, empty rooms, they became bewildered to think how, even if they could get such a place, they would be able to manage or use it.

He visited other places: one so neglected and in such poor repair that it looked as though it had been vandalized, and another, in similar condition, filled with lumber stacked almost to the ceiling. He asked Rūpānuga, who had accompanied him, what he thought, and Rūpānuga said, “Too much time and money to fix it up.” So they left. Swamiji returned to his room and went into the bathroom, where he washed his feet in the tub. He said that it was an Indian custom that after walking outside you wash your feet.

Then the devotees met Mr. Price, an elegantly dressed real estate agent. “You have a handful of stars,” Mr. Price told Brahmānanda. “You're incorporated as a tax-free religious organization. You

have no idea how much money this will save. So many people have to vacate just because they can't pay their taxes. But "someone up there' is looking after you people, and I have just the place for you and your Swami."

Mr. Price showed Brahmānanda a handsome three-story building near St. Mark's Place. It was a good downtown location, near the young people, yet in an area where the uptown people would feel safe. The floors were polished hardwood, all the doors were ornately hand carved, and it had a large hall, suitable for a temple. The Marquis de Lafayette had stayed here during his visit in 1824, a fact that added to the building's charm and prestige.

One evening, Mr. Price visited Prabhupāda up in his room, Prabhupāda sitting on the floor behind his desk and Mr. Price sitting on a metal folding chair. Mr. Price wore an elegant suit and a white dress shirt with cuff links and starched cuffs. His expensive dress, meticulously tanned face, and blond hair (which some devotees thought was a wig) contrasted strangely with the Swami's simplicity. Mr. Price kept referring to Swamiji as "Your Excellency," and he expressed much appreciation of Swamiji's work. He spoke optimistically about how, through his connections, he hoped to save Prabhupāda a lot of money and trouble and get him just the place he wanted.

Accompanied by a few disciples, Prabhupāda went with Mr. Price to see the building. While Mr. Price, the devotees, and the custodian of the house were all talking together in a group, Prabhupāda wandered off unnoticed to a corner of the room, where there was an old-fashioned sewing machine. He began pressing the treadle and examining the workings of the machine. As Prabhupāda rejoined the group, Mr. Price said, "If you can just get five thousand dollars down, I can get the owners to draw up a contract. Five thousand dollars down, and another five thousand within two months—that shouldn't be so difficult." Prabhupāda liked the building and told Brahmānanda they should purchase it.

Brahmānanda was inclined to turn the money over right away, but Prabhupāda said that first a suitable contract had to be drawn up. Mr. Price talked to the devotees in private, speaking in the Swami's interest and in the interest of the spiritual movement, and he seemed to be promising them something even more than a contract. Perhaps he would give them the building. It didn't make sense that he could give the building, but he told them something like that. He wanted the devotees to think of him as their friend, and he invited them over to his house one evening.

When the devotees gathered in his house, sitting stiffly on chairs in his living room, which was lined with bookcases filled not with books, but with two-dimensional designs depicting rows of books, he continued to flatter them. He praised Hayagrīva's writings, and Hayagrīva was obviously embarrassed and flattered. He praised everything about the devotees. He also spoke of how his dog had recently died, and said, "The house seems empty without the little fellow." He was an unusual man, effeminate, and full of flattery and praises. Prabhupāda remained reserved after his first meeting with Mr. Price, though he was interested in getting the building if the proper arrangement could be made.

Brahmānanda continued to negotiate with Mr. Price, and soon, according to Mr. Price, the owners of the building would be expecting the devotees to give proof of their ability to meet the payments. On Prabhupāda's direction, the devotees hired a lawyer to go over the contract. "This Mr. Price is

causing us so much pain," Prabhupāda said. "What is the difficulty?" He didn't see the necessity for Mr. Price at all. "Why don't we purchase directly from the owners? Why all these agents?"

"It's just the way it's done here," Brahmānanda said.

* * *

Alan Kallman was a record producer. He had read the article in *The East Village Other* about the swami from India and the mantra he had brought with him. When he had read the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on the front page, he had become attracted. The article gave the idea that one could get a tremendous high or ecstasy from chanting. The Swami's Second Avenue address was given in the article, so one night in November, Alan and his wife visited the storefront.

Alan: There were about thirty pairs of shoes in the back of the room—people in the front and shoes in the back. We took off our shoes and sat down. Everyone was seated and very quiet. Front and center was a chair, and everyone was staring at this chair. Even then we felt a certain energy in the room. No one was saying anything, and everyone was staring at the chair. The next thing was our first sight of the Swami. He came in and sat down on the chair, and there was a tremendous surge of energy. The Swami began chanting, and it was a very beautiful sound. Swamiji had this little drum he was hitting—very penetrating and exciting. One of the devotees was holding up a sign with the chant written on it so everyone could follow. Then the devotees got up and danced in a circle, a special dance with steps to it. The Swami was looking around the room, and he seemed to smile as he looked at you, as if to encourage you to join.

The next day, Alan phoned Prabhupāda to propose that he make a record of the chanting. But it was Brahmānanda who answered the phone, and he gave Alan an appointment with the Swami that evening. So again Alan and his wife went down to the East Village, which to them was the neighborhood where things were happening. If you wanted to have some excitement, you went down to the East Village.

When they entered the Swami's room, he was seated at his typewriter, working. As soon as Alan mentioned his idea about making a record, Prabhupāda was interested. "Yes," he said, "we must record. If it will help us distribute the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, then it is our duty." They scheduled the recording for two weeks later, in December, at the Adelphi Recording Studio near Times Square. Alan's wife was impressed by how enthusiastically the Swami had gotten to the point of making the record: "He had so much energy and ambition in his plans."

It was the night before the recording date. A boy walked into the storefront for the evening kirtana carrying a large, two-headed Indian drum. This was not unusual, as guests often brought drums, flutes, and other instruments, yet this time Swamiji seemed particularly interested. The boy sat down and was preparing to play when Prabhupāda motioned for the boy to bring him the drum. The boy didn't move—he wanted to play it himself—but Brahmānanda went over and said, "Swamiji wants to play the drum," so the boy gave in.

Brahmānanda: Swamiji began to play, and his hands were just dancing on the drum. Everyone was stunned that Swamiji knew how to do this. All we had seen was the bongo drum, so I thought it

was the proper Indian drum. But when this two-headed drum came out of nowhere and Swamiji started playing it like a master musician, it created an ecstasy a hundred times more than the bongo drum had.

After the kīrtana, Prabhupāda asked the boy if he could borrow the drum for the recording session the next night. The boy at first was reluctant, but the devotees promised to return his drum the next day, so he agreed and said he would bring the drum the next evening. When he left the storefront that night with his drum under his arm, the devotees thought they would never see the boy or his drum again, but the next day, a few hours before Swamiji was to leave for the studio, the boy returned with his drum.

It was a cold December night. The Swami, dressed in his usual saffron dhotī, a tweed overcoat, and a pair of gray shoes (which had long since replaced his original white, pointy rubber ones), got into Rūpānuga's VW van with about fifteen of his followers and their instruments and started for the recording studio.

Brahmānanda: We didn't start recording right away, because there was a group ahead of us. So we went out for a walk in Times Square. We were just standing there with Swamiji, seeing all the flashing lights and all the sense gratification, when a woman came up to Swamiji and said, "Oh, hello. Where do you come from? " in a very loud, matronly way. And Swamiji said, "I am a monk from India." And she said, "Oh, that's wonderful. Glad to meet you." And then she shook Swamiji's hand and left.

At the studio, everyone accepted the devotees as a regular music group. One of the rock musicians asked them what the name of their group was, and Hayagrīva laughed and replied, "The Hare Kṛṣṇa Chanters." Of course most of the devotees weren't actually musicians, and yet the instruments they brought with them—a tamboura, a large harmonium (loaned by Allen Ginsberg), and rhythm instruments—were ones they had played during kīrtanas for months. So as they entered the studio they felt confident that they could produce their own sound. They just followed their Swami. He knew how to play, and they knew how to follow him. They weren't just another music group. It was music, but it was also chanting, meditation, worship.

Prabhupāda sat on a mat in the center of the studio, while the engineers arranged the microphones and assigned each devotee a place to sit according to his particular instrument. They asked for only two pairs of karatālas and they approved of the pairs of rhythm sticks, but they wanted several devotees clapping their hands. Rūpānuga's usual instrument was a pair of brass Indian bells with the tongues removed, and when the engineer saw them, he came over and said, "Let me hear that." Rūpānuga played them, and they passed. Since Ravīndra Svarūpa would be playing the drone on the harmonium, he sat apart with his own microphone, and Kīrtanānanda also had a microphone for the tamboura.

When the engineers were satisfied, they cued the devotees, and Swamiji began chanting and playing his drum. The cymbals and sticks and clapping hands joined him, and the chanting went on steadily for about ten minutes, until an engineer came out of the glass studio and stopped them:

Brahmānanda was clapping too loudly, creating an imbalance. The engineer went back into his studio, put on his headphones, balanced everyone, and cued them for a second take. This time it was better.

The first sound was the tamboura, with its plucked, reverberating twang. An instant later Swamiji began beating the drum and singing, Vande 'haṁ śrī-guroḥ... Then the whole ensemble put out to sea—the tamboura, the harmonium, the clackers, the cymbals, Rūpānuga's bells, Swamiji's solo singing—pushing off from their moorings, out into a fair weather sea of chanting... lalitā-śrī-viśkhānvitāṁś ca...

Swamiji's voice in the studio was very sweet. His boys were feeling love, not just making a record. There was a feeling of success and union, a crowning evening to all their months together.

... Śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya, prabhu-nityānanda...

After a few minutes of singing prayers alone, Swamiji paused briefly while the instruments continued pulsing, and then began the mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare. It was pure Bhaktivedanta Swami—expert, just like his cooking in the kitchen, like his lectures. The engineers liked what they heard—it would be a good take if nothing went wrong. The instruments were all right, the drum, the singing. The harmony was rough. But this was a special record—a happening. The Hare Kṛṣṇa Chanters were doing their thing, and they were doing it all right. Alan Kallman was excited. Here was an authentic sound. Maybe it would sell.

After a few rounds of the mantra, the devotees began to feel relaxed, as though they were back in the temple, and they were able to forget about making mistakes on the record. They just chanted, and the beat steadied into a slightly faster pace. The word hare would come sometimes with a little shout in it, but there were no emotional theatrics in the chorus, just the straight response to the Swami's melody. Ten minutes went by. The chanting went faster, louder and faster—Swamiji doing more fancy things on the drum, until suddenly... everything stopped, with the droning note of the harmonium lingering.

Alan came out of the studio: "It was great, Swami. Great. Would you like to just go right ahead and read the address now? Or are you too tired?" With polite concern, pale, befreckled Alan Kallman peered through his thick glasses at the Swami. Swamiji appeared tired, but he replied, "No, I am not tired." Then the devotees sat back in the studio to watch and listen as Prabhupāda read his prepared statement.

"As explained on the cover of the record album..." The sympathetic devotees thought that Swamiji, despite his accent, sounded perfectly clear, reading from his script like an elocutionist. "...this transcendental vibration by chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare is the sublime method for reviving our Kṛṣṇa consciousness." The language was philosophic, and the kind of people who usually walked out of the temple as soon as the kīrtanas ended, before the Swami could even speak a word, would also not appreciate this speech on their record album. "As living spiritual souls," Swamiji preached, "we are all originally Kṛṣṇa conscious entities. But due to our association with matter from time immemorial, our consciousness is now polluted by material atmosphere." The devotees listened

submissively to the words of their spiritual master, while at the same time trying to comprehend the effect this would have on the audience. Certainly some people would turn it off at the very mention of a spiritual nature. Swamiji continued reading, explaining that the chanting would deliver one from the sensual, the mental, and the intellectual planes and bring one to the spiritual realm.

"We have seen it practically," he continued. "Even a child can take part in the chanting, or even a dog can take part in it... The chanting should be heard, however, from the lips of a pure devotee of the Lord." And he continued reading on to the end. "...No other means, therefore, of spiritual realization is as effective in this age as chanting the mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare."

Alan again came rushing out of the studio. It was fine, he said. He explained that they had recorded a little echo into the speech, to make it special for the listener. "Now," he pushed back his glasses with his finger. "We've got about ten minutes left on the side with the speech. Would you like to chant again? Or is it too late, Swamiji?" Prabhupāda smiled. No, it was not too late. He would chant the prayers to his spiritual master.

While his disciples lounged around the studio, watching their spiritual master and the technical activity of the engineers behind the glass, Prabhupāda began singing. Again the harmonium's drone began, then the tamboura and drum, but with a much smaller rhythm group than before. He sang through, without any retakes, and then ended the song (and the evening) with a fortissimo drumming as the hand-pumped organ notes faded.

Again, Alan came out and thanked the Swami for being so patient and such a good studio musician. Prabhupāda was still sitting. "Now we are tired," he admitted.

Suddenly, over the studio sound system came a playback of the Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting, complete with echo. When Prabhupāda heard the successful recording of his chanting, he became happy and stood and began dancing, swaying back and forth, dipping slightly from the waist, his arms upraised in the style of Lord Caitanya, dancing in ecstasy. The scheduled performance was over, but now Swamiji was making the best performance of the evening from his spontaneous feelings. As he danced, his half-asleep disciples became startled and also rose to their feet and joined him, dancing in the same style. And in the recording booth behind the glass, the engineers also raised their hands and began dancing and chanting.

"Now you have made your best record," Swamiji told Mr. Kallman as he left the studio for the freezing Manhattan evening. Swamiji got into the front seat of the Volkswagen bus while "The Hare Kṛṣṇa Chanters" climbed into the back with their instruments, and Rūpānuga drove them back home, back to the Lower East Side.

The next morning Prabhupāda didn't get up. He was exhausted. Kīrtanānanda, who was personally serving him, became alarmed when the Swami said something about his heart skipping and about not being able to move. For the first time, it became apparent that he was overexerting himself. Kīrtanānanda thought back through the fall and summer, when the Swami had led them all on hours-long kīrtanas in the park or on late-evening ventures—they had come to take it for granted.

But now Kīrtanānanda saw that there was cause to be worried for Swamiji's health. Swamiji had no appetite for lunch, although by afternoon he regained his appetite and usual activity.

That same day, a letter arrived from Mukunda in San Francisco. Not long after their wedding, Mukunda and Janakī had left for the West Coast. Mukunda had told Swamiji that he wanted to go on to India to study Indian music, but after a few weeks in southern Oregon he had ended up in San Francisco. Now he had a better idea. He wanted to rent a place and invite Swamiji to come and start his Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the Haight-Ashbury district, just as he was doing on the Lower East Side. He said that the prospects there for Kṛṣṇa consciousness were very good. On hearing this, Prabhupāda began unfolding his expansive plans. They should open temples not only in San Francisco but, one by one, all over the world, even in Russia and China, and print the Bhagavad-gītā in different languages. And he would translate all the volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam into English and take a party of devotees back to India.

The devotees who heard him were amazed. Kīrtanānanda, who had seen the alarming symptoms of Prabhupāda's ill health, began to forget what he had thought earlier that morning. If Kṛṣṇa desired, Kīrtanānanda thought, Swamiji could do anything.

* * *

When Prabhupāda came down to hold his morning class on November 19, he carried a large red book instead of the usual brown one. But no one noticed the difference. He began as always, softly singing prayers to his spiritual master and accompanying himself with a faint rhythm on his bongo (the neighbors were still asleep).

The weather was cold, but the steam radiators kept the storefront warm. There would be no more outdoor chanting now. In Manhattan, the city opens wide in the summer and shuts tight in the winter, which for the evening classes meant no more noisy children outside the door. And although the morning classes had always been quiet even in the summer, now with winter approaching the group became a tighter, more committed core of sincere students coming together to hear Swamiji speak.

It was now four months since he had begun ISKCON at 26 Second Avenue. He had held three separate initiations and initiated nineteen devotees. Most of them had become serious, although a few remained casual visitors. Now, in these morning classes, Swamiji wanted to instruct them more about how to become devotees.

He led the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa for twenty minutes, cautioning them to respond softly, so that the neighbors would not pour water through the ceiling again—although they hadn't done it lately. Prabhupāda always tried to cooperate with the tenants, but occasionally someone would start a petition—which never amounted to much—against the devotees. Sometimes Prabhupāda would help the landlord, Mr. Chutey, by taking out other tenants' garbage or just giving him a hand.

Mr. Chutey was a husky, beer-bellied Polish refugee who lived alone in an apartment on the first floor. Mr. Chutey respected the Swami for his age and scholarship, and Swamiji was always amiable with him. Whenever Mr. Chutey came to the apartment, he would never take his shoes off, and

Prabhupāda would always say, "That's all right, that's all right." And one time, when the plumbing didn't work in Prabhupāda's apartment, Prabhupāda went downstairs and took a shower in Mr. Chutey's apartment.

But Swamiji also considered Mr. Chutey a classic example of a foolish materialist, because although he had spent his life's savings to buy this building, he still had to work so hard. Swamiji said he was a fool for having spent his savings to buy such a run-down building. Because the building was in such poor condition, he had to work like an ass to keep it up. "This is how the materialists work," Swamiji would say.

Mr. Chutey, although respectful to the Swami, didn't like the devotees. Prabhupāda told his disciples, "Treat him as if he were your father." So that's what they did. Any time they would have to deal with Mr. Chutey, they would approach him saying, "We are your sons."

Those disciples who lived at the storefront had risen by six-thirty, bathed, and assembled downstairs by seven, while those who lived outside were arriving separately, taking off their coats and piling them on the shelf of the display window. Although women always attended the evening meetings, Jadurānī was usually the only girl who came in the morning. After breakfast, she would begin painting upstairs in the Swami's front room. She used a beginner's technique of dividing the canvas into vertical and horizontal grid lines and transposing bit by bit the corresponding sections of a photograph onto the canvas. The process was painstaking, and sometimes her painting was out of proportion. But Jadurānī was sincere, and that pleased Prabhupāda. She had completed several paintings of four-armed Viṣṇu, a new painting of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and a painting of Lord Caitanya and His associates. When the painting of Lord Caitanya was finished, Swamiji had it hung in the temple. "Now," he announced, "there should be no more nonsense here. Lord Caitanya is present."

After the morning kīrtana Swami said, as usual, "Now chant one round." They chanted together, following him. They all had a vow to chant sixteen rounds daily, but they chanted their first round in the morning in the Swami's presence, so he could see each of them. As Swamiji chanted, he looked out at Second Avenue, which was mostly deserted, or at the pictures on the wall, or, with concerned glances, at the individual devotees. Sometimes he seemed surprised when he saw them chanting so earnestly, giving evidence of the power of the holy name to deliver even the most fallen. Some of the devotees kept their beads in a bead bag like his, but when they chanted the first round together in the morning, they imitated him by holding their beads out in both hands and chanting along with him: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, until they finished one round.

Then he held up the unfamiliar red book. "Because you are a little advanced," he said, "I am going to read today from the Caitanya-caritāmṛta." Caitanya what? No one was able to pick up the pronunciation. They had heard of Caitanya, certainly, but not of this new book. But in his room the night before, Prabhupāda had informed some of the devotees that he would start reading from a new book, Caitanya-caritāmṛta. He said that Lord Caitanya had told one of His disciples that understanding Kṛṣṇa wasn't really possible, but that He would give the disciple just a drop of the ocean of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so that the disciple could then appreciate what the whole ocean must be like. "Be patient as I present this," he had told them. "It is revolutionary, but you should just be patient."

In the storefront Brahmānanda turned on the reel-to-reel tape recorder as Swamiji began reading the Bengali verses, and both Satsvarūpa and Umāpati opened their notebooks and waited, poised for rapid notetaking. It was almost a college classroom atmosphere as Prabhupāda cleared his throat, put on his eyeglasses, and peered over the large open volume, turning to the correct page. Whenever he wore the glasses, he seemed to reveal a new personality of deep Vaiṣṇava scholarship. This feature of Swamiji emphasized his old age—not that it showed him feeble or invalid, but it emphasized his scholarship and wisdom and his contemplation of the scriptures, in contrast to his vigorous drum-playing in Tompkins Square Park or his alert business dealings while looking for a new building.

Swamiji began reading and translating the story of Sanātana (Satsvarūpa wrote “Suta” and Umāpati wrote “Sonotan”) and his brother Rūpa, and how they became intimate associates of Lord Caitanya. It was a historical account. Rūpa and Sanātana had been born as brāhmaṇas in India, but they had served in the government under the Muslims, who were in power at that time. The two brothers had even adopted Muslim names. But when Lord Caitanya was touring in their part of the country, they had met Him and had become determined to give up their materialistic ways and follow His path of pure love of God. Rūpa, who was so rich that he had enough gold to fill two boats, left his high government post, divided his wealth, became a mendicant, and joined Lord Caitanya. For Sanātana, however, there were more obstacles.

The Nawab Shah, the chief Muslim ruler of the province of Bengal, was dependent on Sanātana's managerial expertise. But Sanātana began staying home and submitting sick reports, while actually he had employed a dozen brāhmaṇas, who were teaching him the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The Nawab sent his physician to find out the actual state of Sanātana's health, and when the Nawab heard that Sanātana was not actually ill, he himself arrived one day, surprising Sanātana and the brāhmaṇas. The Nawab demanded that Sanātana return to his government work and leave him free to do some hunting and to leave Bengal on a military campaign. But Sanātana said that he could not, that he was now determined to study the scriptures, and that the Nawab could do with him whatever he liked. At this challenge, the Nawab imprisoned Sanātana...

Swamiji looked at his watch. Morning classes were shorter than those in the evening—only half an hour—and Rūpānuga, Satsvarūpa, and Brahmānanda had to go to work. He paused in his narration—“So, we will discuss tomorrow.” Prabhupāda closed the book, and after a few informal words, he got up and left the storefront, followed by Kīrtanānanda, who carried his book and glasses.

Breakfast was served every morning in the storefront. Either Acyutānanda or Kīrtanānanda would cook an oatmeal cereal for the devotees. Satsvarūpa had read in an English edition of the Rāmāyaṇa about some sages preparing a mystical cereal called “Heavenly Porridge.” The name had caught on, and the devotees began calling their own cereal Heavenly Porridge. The popular fare would consist of steaming hot Heavenly Porridge (sweetened to taste with sugar syrup from the gulābjāmūn pot), hot milk, and fruit. And each devotee would get an ISKCON bullet.

At breakfast this morning, the talk was of Rūpa and Sanātana. Umāpati said the Caitanya-caritāmṛta was available in an English translation, but maybe the Swami wouldn't want them to read it. “We'll

hear it from Swamiji," Kīrtanānanda said. Hayagrīva was amused at the "cliff-hanger" ending of the class. "Tune in tomorrow," he laughed loosely, "and hear what happened to... what's his name?" The devotees responded differently: "Santan"... "Sonoton"... "Sanātana." Hayagrīva: "Yeah, tune in tomorrow and hear. Will Sanātana get out of jail?" They were not the most sober group when together, especially after taking the thick, sweet syrup. Acyutānanda spilled some of the syrup on the rug, and Kīrtanānanda admonished him. Jadurāṇī ate silently and hurried to begin a day's painting in Prabhupāda's room. Satsvarūpa adjusted his tie, and he and Rūpānuga and Brahmānanda went to their jobs.

The next morning, the Caitanya-caritāmṛta seminar began with Sanātana in jail, planning how to get free to join Lord Caitanya. His brother Rūpa sent him a note saying that he had left a large sum of gold for Sanātana in the care of a grocer, and Sanātana offered the gold to the jailer as a bribe. He told him, "Sir, I know you are a very learned man, and in your Koran it says that if you aid someone in going to spiritual life, then you will be elevated to the highest post. I am going to Lord Caitanya, and if you will assist me in escaping, it will be spiritual gain for you. Also, I will give you five hundred gold coins, so it will be material gain as well." The jail keeper said, "All right. But I am afraid of the king." So Sanātana advised him, "Just say that when I was passing stool by the river, I fell in with my chains and was washed away." For seven hundred gold coins, the jailer agreed to help Sanātana and sawed off the shackles. Sanātana, accompanied by his servant, then fled by the back roads until by nighttime he came upon a hotel.

Now this hotel was kept by thieves, and an astrologer at the hotel read Sanātana's palm and judged by the stars that he had money. When Sanātana asked for assistance in passing over the jungle mountains, the hotel keeper said that he would help Sanātana leave, in the dead of the night. They treated Sanātana with great respect, which made him suspicious, since he hadn't eaten in three days and his clothes were unclean. So he asked his servant if he had any money. The servant said yes, he had seven gold coins, and Sanātana immediately took the money to the hotel keeper, who was already planning to kill him during the night and take his money...

Swamiji looked at his watch. Again they had gone overtime. "So we will continue tomorrow," he said, closing the book "—how Sanātana manages to escape the dacoits."

Kīrtanānanda, Brahmānanda, Acyutānanda, Gargamuni, Satsvarūpa, Hayagrīva, Umāpati, Jadurāṇī, Rūpānuga, Dāmodara (Dan Clark)—their lives had all been transformed. Over the months they had transferred the center of their lives to Swamiji, and everything revolved around the routine of classes and kīrtana and prasādam and coming and going to and from the storefront.

Brahmānanda and Gargamuni had given up their apartment several months ago and moved into the storefront. The ceiling of Acyutānanda's apartment had caved in one day, just minutes after he had left the room, and he had decided to move to the storefront also. Hayagrīva and Umāpati had cleaned up their Mott Street place and were using it only for chanting, sleeping, or reading Swamiji's Bhāgavatam. Satsvarūpa had announced one day that the devotees could use his apartment, just around the corner from the temple, for taking showers, and the next day Rāya Rāma had moved in, and the others began using the apartment as a temple annex. Jadurāṇī kept making her early-morning treks from the Bronx. (Swamiji had said that he had no objection to her living in the second room of his apartment, but that people would talk.) Even Rūpānuga and Dāmodara,

whose backgrounds and tastes were different, were also positively dependent on the daily morning class and the evening class three nights a week and in knowing that Swamiji was always there in his apartment whenever they needed him.

There were, however, some threats to this security. Prabhupāda would sometimes say that unless he got permanent residency from the government, he would have to leave the country. But he had gone to a lawyer, and after the initial alarm it seemed that Swamiji would stay indefinitely. There was also the threat that he might go to San Francisco. He said he was going, but then sometimes he said he wasn't. If the negotiations through Mr. Price for the building on Tenth Street came through, then, Swamiji said, he would make his headquarters in New York City and not go to San Francisco.

But at least in the morning sessions, as his disciples listened to him speak on Caitanya-caritāmṛta, these threats were all put out of mind, and the timeless, intimate teachings took up their full attention. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was a struggle, keeping yourself strictly following Swamiji's code against māyā—"No illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling, no meat-eating." But it was possible as long as they could hear him singing and reading and speaking from Caitanya-caritāmṛta. They counted on his presence for their Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was the center of their newly spiritualized lives, and he was all they knew of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As long as they could keep coming and seeing him, Kṛṣṇa consciousness was a sure thing—as long as he was there.

Seated on the worn rug, they looked up at him, waiting for him to begin the next installment. Prabhupāda cleared his throat and glanced down at Brahmānanda, who sat beside the silently running tape recorder. Satsvarūpa entered the date in his notebook. Prabhupāda began reading the Bengali verses and paraphrasing...

Sanātana took the seven gold coins from his servant and gave them to the hotel keeper. "You have eight coins," the astrologer said. And Sanātana went back and found that his servant was retaining another gold coin. "Why do you carry this death knell on the road?" Sanātana asked. "You are too attached to money." And he took the gold piece from his servant and told him to return home. Sanātana then brought the gold coin to the hotel keeper. But the hotel keeper, who admitted that he had intended to kill Sanātana for his money, now said, "You are a good man, and you may keep your money." But Sanātana refused. Then the hotel keeper provided Sanātana with four assistants. They helped Sanātana through the jungle and then left him alone.

Free from his nuisance servant and from the dacoits, Sanātana felt liberated as he passed along the road alone. Soon he came upon his brother-in-law, who was traveling along the same road. His brother-in-law was a wealthy man carrying a great deal of money to buy horses. "Please stay with me at least a few days," Sanātana's brother in-law said. "It's really bad how you look." The brother-in-law knew that Sanātana was going to spiritual life, but he requested that he improve his dress by accepting a valuable blanket from him. Sanātana took the blanket and continued on his way.

At last, Sanātana reached Benares, and he went straight to the home of Candraśekhara, where Lord Caitanya was staying, and waited outside the door. Lord Caitanya knew Sanātana had arrived, and He requested Candraśekhara to go to the door and ask the devotee who was waiting there to come in. Candraśekhara went out but saw only the wretched-looking Sanātana, whom he took to be a half-mad Muhammadan fakir. Candraśekhara returned to Lord Caitanya and explained that there

was no devotee outside. "Was there anyone at all?" the Lord asked. "Yes," said Candraśekhara, "some wretched fakir." Then Lord Caitanya went to the door and embraced Sanātana. The Lord cried tears of ecstasy, for He had at last found a devotee whom He knew was worthy to receive His entire teachings. And Sanātana cried tears of joy that his life's ambition was being fulfilled; but because he was dirty from his traveling and not worthy, he asked the Lord not to touch him. The Lord replied, "It is I who benefit from touching you; whoever touches a true devotee is blessed."

Prabhupāda closed the book, ending another morning session.

One of Prabhupāda's main concerns was to finish and publish as soon as possible his translation and commentary of Bhagavad-gītā, and one day something happened that enabled him to increase his work on the manuscript. Unexpectedly, a boy named Neal arrived. He was a student from Antioch College on a special work-study program, and he had the school's approval to work one term within the āśrama of Swami Bhaktivedanta, which he had heard about through the newspapers. Neal mentioned that he was a good typist, if that could be of any help to the Swami. Prabhupāda considered this to be Kṛṣṇa's blessing. Immediately he rented a dictaphone and began dictating tapes, Hayagrīva donated his electric typewriter, and Neal set up his work area in Swamiji's front room and began typing eight hours a day. This inspired Prabhupāda and obliged him to produce more. He worked quickly, sometimes day and night, on his Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. He had founded ISKCON five months ago, yet in his classes he was still reading the Bhagavad-gītā translation of Dr. Radhakrishnan. But when Bhagavad-gītā As It Is would at last be published, he told his disciples, it would be of major importance for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. At last there would be a bona fide edition of the Gītā.

Whatever Swamiji said or did, his disciples wanted to hear about it. Gradually, they had increased their faith and devotion to Swamiji, whom they accepted as God's representative, and they took his actions and words to be absolute. After one of the disciples had been alone with him, the others would gather around to find out every detail of what had happened. It was Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Jadurāṇī was especially guileless in relating what Swamiji had said or done. One day, Prabhupāda had stepped on a tack that Jadurāṇī had dropped on the floor, and although she knew it was a serious offense to her spiritual master, the major importance of the event seemed to be how Prabhupāda had displayed his transcendental consciousness. He silently and emotionlessly reached down and pulled the tack from his foot, without so much as a cry. And once, when she was fixing a painting over his head behind the desk, she had accidentally stepped on his sitting mat. "Is that an offense?" she had asked. And Swamiji had replied, "No. For service you could even stand on my head."

Sometimes Brahmānanda would say that Swamiji had told him something very intimate about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in private. But when he would tell what Swamiji had said, someone else would recall that the same thing was in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Prabhupāda had said that the spiritual master is present in his instructions and that he had tried to put everything into those three volumes of the Bhāgavatam, and the devotees were finding this to be true.

There were no secrets in Swamiji's family of devotees. Everyone knew that Umāpati had left for a few days, disappointed with the Swami's severe criticism of the Buddhists, but had come back, and in a heavy, sincere exchange with Prabhupāda, he had decided to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness

again. And everyone knew that Satsvarūpa had resigned from his job and that when he went to tell Swamiji about it, Swamiji had told him that he could not quit but should go on earning money for Kṛṣṇa and donating it to the Society and that this would be his best service. And everyone knew that Swamiji wanted Gargamuni to cut his hair—Swamiji called it “Gargamuni's Shakespearean locks”—but that he would not do so.

The year ended, and Prabhupāda was still working on his manuscript of Bhagavad-gītā, still lecturing in the mornings from Caitanya-caritāmṛta and Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings from Bhagavad-gītā, and still talking of going to San Francisco. Then New Year's Eve came, and the devotees suggested that since this was a holiday when people go out to celebrate, maybe they should hold a Kṛṣṇa conscious festival.

Rūpānuga: So we had a big feast, and a lot of people came, although it wasn't as crowded as the Sunday feasts. We were all taking prasādam, and Swamiji was sitting up on his dais, and he was also taking prasādam. He was demanding that we eat lots of prasādam. And then he was saying, “Chant! Chant!” So we were eating, and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa between bites, and he was insisting on more and more prasādam. I was amazed. He stayed with us and kept insisting that we eat so much. He stayed until around eleven o'clock, and then he became drowsy. And the party was over.

Morning after morning, the story of Sanātana Gosvāmī unfolded from the pages of Swamiji's big book, which only he could read and explain. Lord Caitanya told Sanātana that he should be very grateful that Kṛṣṇa had been merciful to him, to which Sanātana replied, “You say that Kṛṣṇa is very merciful, but I do not know who Kṛṣṇa is. You have saved me.”

Lord Caitanya had many devotees in Benares, and He sent Sanātana to the home of one of His friends where he could get something to eat, take a bath, shave, and dress in new clothing. Sanātana, however, refused the new clothing, and he also refused to become dependent on one place for his meals. Now that he had entered the renounced order, he preferred to go begging his meals at a different place each day. When Lord Caitanya saw all this, He was pleased, but Sanātana sensed that his valuable blanket did not please the Lord, so he traded the new blanket for an old one. This pleased Lord Caitanya, who said, “Now you are completely renounced. Your last attachment is gone, by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa.”

Sanātana submitted himself at the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya and said, “I have wasted my time in sense gratification. I am lowborn, and I have low association. I have no qualification for spiritual life. I do not even know what is actually beneficial for me. People say that I am learned, but I am fool number one, because although people say I am learned, and although I accept it, still I do not know who I am.” Sanātana presented himself as a blank slate, and he inquired from the Lord, “Who am I? Why am I in this material world? Why am I suffering?” Prabhupāda emphasized that this was the perfect way for a disciple to accept a spiritual master.

After narrating the story of Sanātana's joining Lord Caitanya, Prabhupāda began lecturing on the Lord's teachings to Sanātana. Lord Caitanya first explained that the living being is not the material body but an eternal living soul within the body. Then, for two months, Lord Caitanya instructed Sanātana, revealing to him the deepest and most sublime philosophical truths of Vedic wisdom. He enlightened Sanātana regarding the soul and its relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the nature of the material

and spiritual worlds, the characteristics of a fully realized soul, and the transcendental nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His unlimited forms, expansions, incarnations, and divine pastimes. He explained the superiority of the path of bhakti-yoga over the paths of philosophical speculation and yogic mysticism. And He revealed to Sanātana the esoteric knowledge of spiritual ecstasy experienced by those souls who have achieved pure love for Kṛṣṇa. These teachings of the Lord were like an ocean that overflowed the mind of Sanātana Gosvāmī with its sweetness and grandeur. When Lord Caitanya had finished instructing Sanātana, He gave Sanātana the benediction that all those sublime teachings would be fully manifested within his heart, thus enabling him to compose transcendental literature.

For two months Lord Caitanya had instructed Sanātana Gosvāmī, and for two months, starting in mid-November of 1966, Śrīla Prabhupāda narrated in over fifty lectures the Caitanya-caritāmṛta's account of those teachings. Although each of his talks covered the subject matter of the verses, his lectures were never limited to his subject, nor were they prepared talks.

* * *

Sometimes, during the evening gatherings in his room, Swamiji would ask whether Mukunda was ready on the West Coast. For months, Prabhupāda's going to the West Coast had been one of a number of alternatives. But then, during the first week of the New Year, a letter arrived from Mukunda: he had rented a storefront in the heart of the Haight-Ashbury district, on Frederick Street. "We are busy converting it into a temple now," he wrote. And Prabhupāda announced: "I shall go immediately."

Mukunda had told of a "Gathering of the Tribes" in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury. Thousands of hippies were migrating from all over the country to the very neighborhood where Mukunda had rented the storefront. It was a youth renaissance much bigger than what was going on in New York City. In a scheme to raise funds for the new temple, Mukunda was planning a "Mantra-Rock Dance," and famous rock bands were going to appear. And Swami Bhaktivedanta and the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa were to be the center of attraction!

Although in his letter Mukunda had enclosed a plane ticket, some of Swamiji's followers refused to accept that Swamiji would use it. Those who knew they could not leave New York began to criticize the idea of Swamiji's going to San Francisco. They didn't think that people out on the West Coast could take care of Swamiji properly. Swamiji appearing with rock musicians? Those people out there didn't seem to have the proper respect. Anyway, there was no suitable temple there. There was no printing press, no Back to Godhead magazine. Why should Swamiji leave New York to attend a function like that with strangers in California? How could he leave them behind in New York? How could their spiritual life continue without him? Timidly, one or two dissenters indirectly expressed some of these feelings to Prabhupāda, as if almost wishing to admonish him for thinking of leaving them, and even hinting that things would not go well, either in San Francisco or New York, if he departed. But they found Prabhupāda quite confident and determined. He did not belong to New York, he belonged to Kṛṣṇa, and he had to go wherever Kṛṣṇa desired him to preach. Prabhupāda showed a spirit of complete detachment, eager to travel and expand the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Brahmānanda: But we were shocked that he was going to leave. I never thought that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would go beyond the Lower East Side, what to speak of New York City. I thought that this was it, and it would stay here eternally.

In the last days of the second week of January, final plane reservations were made, and the devotees began packing Swamiji's manuscripts away in trunks. Ranchor, a new devotee recruited from Tompkins Square Park, had collected enough money for a plane ticket, and the devotees decided that he should accompany Prabhupāda as his personal assistant. Prabhupāda explained that he would only be gone a few weeks, and that he wanted all the programs to go on in his absence.

He waited in his room while the boys arranged for a car to take him to the airport. The day was gray and cold, and steam hissed in the radiators. He would take only a suitcase—mostly clothes and some books. He checked the closet to see that his manuscripts were in order. Kīrtanānanda would take care of his things in his apartment. He sat down at his desk where, for more than six months, he had sat so many times, working for hours at the typewriter preparing his Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and where he had sat talking to so many guests and to his followers. But today he would not be talking with friends or typing a manuscript, but waiting a last few minutes alone before his departure.

This was his second winter in New York. He had launched a movement of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A few sincere boys and girls had joined. They were already well known on the Lower East Side—many notices in the newspapers. And it was only the beginning.

He had left Vṛndāvana for this. At first he had not been certain whether he would stay in America more than two months. In Butler he had presented his books. But then in New York he had seen how Dr. Mishra had developed things, and the Māyāvādīs had a big building. They were taking money and not even delivering the real message of the Gītā. But the American people were looking.

It had been a difficult year. His Godbrothers hadn't been interested in helping, although this is what their Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, wanted, and what Lord Caitanya wanted. Because Lord Caitanya wanted it, His blessings would come, and it would happen.

This was a nice place, 26 Second Avenue. He had started here. The boys would keep it up. Some of them were donating their salaries. It was a start.

Prabhupāda looked at his watch. He put on his tweed winter coat and his hat and shoes, put his right hand in his bead bag, and continued chanting. He walked out of the apartment, down the stairs, and through the courtyard, which was now frozen and still, its trees starkly bare without a single leaf remaining. And he left the storefront behind.

He left, even while Brahmānanda, Rūpānuga, and Satsvarūpa were at their office jobs. There was not even a farewell scene or a farewell address.

SPL 22: "Swami Invites the Hippies"

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

“Swami Invites

the Hippies”

= January 16, 1967

As the United Airlines jet descended on the San Francisco Bay area, Śrīla Prabhupāda turned to his disciple Raṇacora and said, “The buildings look like matchboxes. Just imagine how it looks from Kṛṣṇa's viewpoint.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was seventy-one years old, and this had been his first air trip. Raṇacora, nineteen and dressed in a suit and tie, was supposed to be Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary. He was a new disciple but had raised some money and had asked to fly to San Francisco with Prabhupāda.

During the trip Śrīla Prabhupāda had spoken little. He had been chanting: “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.” His right hand in his cloth bead bag, he had been fingering one bead after another as he chanted silently to himself. When the plane had first risen over New York City, he had looked out the window at the buildings growing smaller and smaller. Then the plane had entered the clouds, which to Prabhupāda had appeared like an ocean in the sky. He had been bothered by pressure blocking his ears and had mentioned it; otherwise he hadn't said much, but had only chanted Kṛṣṇa's names over and over. Now, as the plane began its descent, he continued to chant, his voice slightly audible— “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa...”—and he looked out the window at the vista of thousands of matchbox houses and streets stretching in charted patterns in every direction.

When the announcement for United Airlines Flight 21 from New York came over the public-address system, the group of about fifty hippies gathered closer together in anticipation. For a moment they appeared almost apprehensive, unsure of what to expect or what the Swami would be like.

Roger Segal: We were quite an assorted lot, even for the San Francisco airport. Mukunda was wearing a Merlin the Magician robe with paisley squares all around, Sam was wearing a Moroccan sheep robe with a hood—he even smelled like a sheep—and I was wearing a sort of blue homemade Japanese samurai robe with small white dots. Long strings of beads were everywhere. Buckskins, boots, army fatigues, people wearing small, round sunglasses—the whole phantasmagoria of San Francisco at its height.

Only a few people in the crowd knew Swamiji: Mukunda and his wife, Jānakī; Ravindra-svarūpa; Rāya Rāma—all from New York. And Allen Ginsberg was there. (A few days before, Allen had been one of the leaders of the Human Be-In in Golden Gate Park, where over two hundred thousand had come together—“A Gathering of the Tribes... for a joyful pow-wow and Peace Dance.”) Today Allen was on hand to greet Swami Bhaktivedanta, whom he had met and chanted with several months before on New York's Lower East Side.

Swamiji would be pleased, Mukunda reminded everyone, if they were all chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa when he came through the gate. They were already familiar with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. They had heard about the Swami's chanting in the park in New York or they had seen the article about Swamiji and the chanting in the local underground paper, *The Oracle*. Earlier today they had gathered in Golden Gate Park—most of them responding to a flyer Mukunda had distributed—and had chanted there for more than an hour before coming to the airport in a caravan of cars. Now many of them—also in response to Mukunda's flyer—stood with incense and flowers in their hands.

As the disembarking passengers entered the terminal gate and walked up the ramp, they looked in amazement at the reception party of flower-bearing chanters. The chanters, however, gazed past these ordinary, tired-looking travelers, searching for that special person who was supposed to be on the plane. Suddenly, strolling toward them was the Swami, golden-complexioned, dressed in bright saffron robes.

Prabhupāda had heard the chanting even before he had entered the terminal, and he had begun to smile. He was happy and surprised. Glancing over the faces, he recognized only a few. Yet here were fifty people receiving him and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa without his having said a word!

Mukunda: We just had a look at Swamiji, and then we bowed down—myself, my wife, and the friends I had brought, Sam and Marjorie. And then all of the young men and women there followed suit and all bowed down to Swamiji, just feeling very confident that it was the right and proper thing to do.

The crowd of hippies had formed a line on either side of a narrow passage through which Swamiji would walk. As he passed among his new admirers, dozens of hands stretched out to offer him flowers and incense. He smiled, collecting the offerings in his hands while Raṇacora looked on. Allen Ginsberg stepped forward with a large bouquet of flowers, and Śrīla Prabhupāda graciously accepted it. Then Prabhupāda began offering the gifts back to all who reached out to receive them. He proceeded through the terminal, the crowd of young people walking beside him, chanting.

At the baggage claim Śrīla Prabhupāda waited for a moment, his eyes taking in everyone around him. Lifting his open palms, he beckoned everyone to chant louder, and the group burst into renewed chanting, with Prabhupāda standing in their midst, softly clapping his hands and singing Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gracefully, he then raised his arms above his head and began to dance, stepping and swaying from side to side.

To the mixed chagrin, amusement, and irresistible joy of the airport workers and passengers, the reception party stayed with Prabhupāda until he got his luggage. Then they escorted him outside into the sunlight and into a waiting car, a black 1949 Cadillac Fleetwood. Prabhupāda got into the back seat with Mukunda and Allen Ginsberg. Until the moment the car pulled away from the curb, Śrīla Prabhupāda, still smiling, continued handing flowers to all those who had come to welcome him as he brought Kṛṣṇa consciousness west.

The Cadillac belonged to Harvey Cohen, who almost a year before had allowed Prabhupāda to stay in his Bowery loft. Harvey was driving, but because of his chauffeur's hat (picked up at a Salvation Army store) and his black suit and his beard, Prabhupāda didn't recognize him.

"Where is Harvey?" Prabhupāda asked.

"He's driving," Mukunda said.

"Oh, is that you? I didn't recognize you."

Harvey smiled. "Welcome to San Francisco, Swamiji."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was happy to be in another big Western city on behalf of his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and Lord Caitanya. The further west one goes, Lord Caitanya had said, the more materialistic the people. Yet, Lord Caitanya had also said that Kṛṣṇa consciousness should spread all over the world. Prabhupāda's Godbrothers had often wondered about Lord Caitanya's statement that one day the name of Kṛṣṇa would be sung in every town and village. Perhaps that verse should be taken symbolically, they said; otherwise, what could it mean—Kṛṣṇa in every town? But Śrīla Prabhupāda had deep faith in that statement by Lord Caitanya and in the instruction of his spiritual master. Here he was in the far-Western city of San Francisco, and already people were chanting. They had enthusiastically received him with flowers and kīrtana. And all over the world there were other cities much like this one.

The temple Mukunda and his friends had obtained was on Frederick Street in the Haight-Ashbury district. Like the temple at 26 Second Avenue in New York, it was a small storefront with a display window facing the street. A sign over the window read, SRI SRI RADHA KRISHNA TEMPLE. Mukunda and his friends had also rented a three-room apartment for Swamiji on the third floor of the adjoining building. It was a small, bare, run-down apartment facing the street.

Followed by several carloads of devotees and curious seekers, Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived at 518 Frederick Street and entered the storefront, which was decorated only by a few madras cloths on the wall. Taking his seat on a cushion, he led a kīrtana and then spoke, inviting everyone to take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. After his lecture he left the storefront and walked next door and up the two flights of stairs to his apartment. As he entered his apartment, number 32, he was followed not only by his devotees and admirers but also by reporters from San Francisco's main newspapers: the Chronicle and the Examiner. While some devotees cooked his lunch and Raṇacora unpacked his suitcase, Swamiji talked with the reporters, who sat on the floor, taking notes on their pads.

Reporter: "Downstairs, you said you were inviting everyone to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Does that include the Haight-Ashbury Bohemians and beatniks?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, everyone, including you or anybody else, be he or she what is called an 'acidhead' or a hippie or something else. But once he is accepted for training, he becomes something else from what he had been before."

Reporter: "What does one have to do to become a member of your movement?"

Prabhupāda: "There are four prerequisites. I do not allow my students to keep girl friends. I prohibit all kinds of intoxicants, including coffee, tea and cigarettes. I prohibit meat-eating. And I prohibit my students from taking part in gambling."

Reporter: "Do these shall-not commandments extend to the use of LSD, marijuana, and other narcotics?"

Prabhupāda: "I consider LSD to be an intoxicant. I do not allow any one of my students to use that or any intoxicant. I train my students to rise early in the morning, to take a bath early in the day, and to attend prayer meetings three times a day. Our sect is one of austerity. It is the science of God."

Although Prabhupāda had found that reporters generally did not report his philosophy, he took the opportunity to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even if the reporters didn't want to delve into the philosophy, his followers did. "The big mistake of modern civilization," Śrīla Prabhupāda continued "is to encroach upon others' property as though it were one's own. This creates an unnatural disturbance. God is the ultimate proprietor of everything in the universe. When people know that God is the ultimate proprietor, the best friend of all living entities, and the object of all offerings and sacrifices—then there will be peace."

The reporters asked him about his background, and he told briefly about his coming from India and beginning in New York.

After the reporters left, Prabhupāda continued speaking to the young people in his room. Mukunda, who had allowed his hair and beard to grow but who wore around his neck the strand of large red beads Swamiji had given him at initiation, introduced some of his friends and explained that they were all living together and that they wanted to help Swamiji present Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the young people of San Francisco. Mukunda's wife, Jānakī, asked Swamiji about his plane ride. He said it had been pleasant except for some pressure in his ears. "The houses looked like matchboxes," he said, and with his thumb and forefinger he indicated the size of a matchbox.

He leaned back against the wall and took off the garlands he had received that day, until only a beaded necklace—a common, inexpensive item with a small bell on it—remained hanging around his neck. Prabhupāda held it, inspected the workmanship, and toyed with it. "This is special," he said, looking up, "because it was made with devotion." He continued to pay attention to the necklace, as if receiving it had been one of the most important events of the day.

When his lunch arrived, he distributed some to everyone, and then Raṇacora efficiently though tactlessly asked everyone to leave and give the Swami a little time to eat and rest.

Outside the apartment and in the storefront below, the talk was of Swamiji. No one had been disappointed. Everything Mukunda had been telling them about him was true. They particularly enjoyed how he had talked about seeing everything from Kṛṣṇa's viewpoint.

That night on television Swamiji's arrival was covered on the eleven o'clock news, and the next day it appeared in the newspapers. The Examiner's story was on page two—"Swami Invites the

Hippies"—along with a photo of the temple, filled with followers, and some shots of Swamiji, who looked very grave. Prabhupāda had Mukunda read the article aloud.

"The lanky "Master of the Faith," Mukunda read, "attired in a flowing ankle-long robe and sitting cross-legged on a big mattress—"

Swamiji interrupted, "What is this word lanky?"

Mukunda explained that it meant tall and slender. "I don't know why they said that," he added. "Maybe it's because you sit so straight and tall, so they think that you are very tall." The article went on to describe many of the airport greeters as being "of the long-haired, bearded and sandaled set."

San Francisco's largest paper, the Chronicle, also ran an article: "Swami in Hippie-Land—Holy Man Opens S.F. Temple." The article began, "A holy man from India, described by his friend and beat poet Allen Ginsberg as one of the more conservative leaders of his faith, launched a kind of evangelistic effort yesterday in the heart of San Francisco's hippie haven."

Śrīla Prabhupāda objected to being called conservative. He was indignant: "Conservative? How is that?"

"In respect to sex and drugs," Mukunda suggested.

"Of course, we are conservative in that sense," Prabhupāda said. "That simply means we are following śāstra. We cannot depart from Bhagavad-gītā. But conservative we are not. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was so strict that He would not even look on a woman, but we are accepting everyone into this movement, regardless of sex, caste, position, or whatever. Everyone is invited to come chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's munificence, His liberality. No, we are not conservative."

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda rose from bed and turned on the light. It was one A.M. Although the alarm had not sounded and no one had come to wake him, he had risen on his own. The apartment was cold and quiet. Wrapping his cādar around his shoulders, he sat quietly at his makeshift desk (a trunk filled with manuscripts) and in deep concentration chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on his beads.

After an hour of chanting, Śrīla Prabhupāda turned to his writing. Although two years had passed since he had published a book (the third and final volume of the First Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam), he had daily been working, sometimes on his translation and commentary of the Second Canto but mostly on Bhagavad-gītā. In the 1940s in India he had written an entire Bhagavad-gītā translation and commentary, but his only copy had mysteriously disappeared. Then in 1965, after a few months in America, he had begun again, starting with the Introduction, which he had composed in his room on Seventy-second Street in New York. Now thousands of manuscript pages filled his trunk, completing his Bhagavad-gītā. If his New York disciple

Hayagrīva, formerly an English professor, could edit it, and if some of the other disciples could get it published, that would be an important achievement.

But publishing books in America seemed difficult—more difficult than in India. Even though in India he had been alone, he had managed to publish three volumes in three years. Here in America he had many followers; but many followers meant increased responsibilities. And none of his followers as yet seemed seriously inclined to take up typing, editing, and dealing with American businessmen. Yet despite the dim prospects for publishing his Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīla Prabhupāda had begun translating another book, Caitanya-caritāmṛta, the principal Vaiṣṇava scripture on the life and teachings of Lord Caitanya.

Putting on his reading glasses, Prabhupāda opened his books and turned on the dictating machine. He studied the Bengali and Sanskrit texts, then picked up the microphone, flicked the switch to record, flashing on a small red light, and began speaking: “While the Lord was going, chanting and dancing,...” (he spoke no more than a phrase at a time, flicking the switch, pausing, and then dictating again) “thousands of people were following Him,... and some of them were laughing, some were dancing,... and some singing... Some of them were falling on the ground offering obeisances to the Lord.” Speaking and pausing, clicking the switch on and off, he would sit straight, sometimes gently rocking and nodding his head as he urged forward his words. Or he would bend low over his books, carefully studying them through his reading glasses.

An hour passed, and Prabhupāda worked on. The building was dark except for Prabhupāda's lamp and quiet except for the sound of his voice and the click and hum of the dictating machine. He wore a faded peach turtleneck jersey beneath his gray wool cādar, and since he had just risen from bed, his saffron dhotī was wrinkled. Without having washed his face or gone to the bathroom he sat, absorbed in his work. At least for these few rare hours, the street and the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple were quiet.

This situation—with the night dark, the surroundings quiet, and him at his transcendental literary work—was not much different from his early-morning hours in his room at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana, India. There, of course, he had had no dictating machine, but he had worked during the same hours and from the same text, Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Once he had begun a verse-by-verse translation with commentary, and another time he had written essays on the text. Now, having just arrived in this corner of the world, so remote from the scenes of Lord Caitanya's pastimes, he was beginning the first chapter of a new English version of Caitanya-caritāmṛta. He called it Teachings of Lord Caitanya.

He was following what had become a vital routine in his life: rising early and writing the paramparā message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Putting aside all other considerations, disregarding present circumstances, he would merge into the timeless message of transcendental knowledge. This was his most important service to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. The thought of producing more books and distributing them widely inspired him to rise every night and translate.

Prabhupāda worked until dawn. Then he stopped and prepared himself to go down to the temple for the morning meeting.

* * *

Though some of the New York disciples had objected, Śrīla Prabhupāda was still scheduled for the Mantra-Rock Dance at the Avalon Ballroom. It wasn't proper, they had said, for the devotees out in San Francisco to ask their spiritual master to go to such a place. It would mean amplified guitars, pounding drums, wild light shows, and hundreds of drugged hippies. How could his pure message be heard in such a place?

But in San Francisco Mukunda and others had been working on the Mantra-Rock Dance for months. It would draw thousands of young people, and the San Francisco Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple stood to make thousands of dollars. So although among his New York disciples Śrīla Prabhupāda had expressed uncertainty, he now said nothing to deter the enthusiasm of his San Francisco followers.

Sam Speerstra, Mukunda's friend and one of the Mantra-Rock organizers, explained the idea to Hayagrīva, who had just arrived from New York: "There's a whole new school of San Francisco music opening up. The Grateful Dead have already cut their first record. Their offer to do this dance is a great publicity boost just when we need it."

"But Swamiji says that even Ravi Shankar is *māyā*," Hayagrīva said.

"Oh, it's all been arranged," Sam assured him. "All the bands will be onstage, and Allen Ginsberg will introduce Swamiji to San Francisco. Swamiji will talk and then chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, with the bands joining in. Then he leaves. There should be around four thousand people there."

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew he would not compromise himself; he would go, chant, and then leave. The important thing was to spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. If thousands of young people gathering to hear rock music could be engaged in hearing and chanting the names of God, then what was the harm? As a preacher, Prabhupāda was prepared to go anywhere to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Since chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa was absolute, one who heard or chanted the names of Kṛṣṇa—anyone, anywhere, in any condition—could be saved from falling to the lower species in the next life. These young hippies wanted something spiritual, but they had no direction. They were confused, accepting hallucinations as spiritual visions. But they were seeking genuine spiritual life, just like many of the young people on the Lower East Side. Prabhupāda decided he would go; his disciples wanted him to, and he was their servant and the servant of Lord Caitanya.

Mukunda, Sam, and Harvey Cohen had already met with rock entrepreneur Chet Helms, who had agreed that they could use his Avalon Ballroom and that, if they could get the bands to come, everything above the cost for the groups, the security, and a few other basics would go as profit for the San Francisco Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple. Mukunda and Sam had then gone calling on the music groups, most of whom lived in the Bay Area, and one after another the exciting new San Francisco rock bands—the Grateful Dead, Moby Grape, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service—had agreed to appear with Swami Bhaktivedanta for the minimum wage of \$250 per group. And Allen Ginsberg had agreed. The lineup was complete.

In San Francisco every rock concert had an art poster, many of them designed by the psychedelic artist called Mouse. One thing about Mouse's posters was that it was difficult to tell where the letters left off and the background began. He used dissonant colors that made his posters seem to flash on and off. Borrowing from this tradition, Harvey Cohen had created a unique poster—KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS COMES WEST—using red and blue concentric circles and a candid photo of Swamiji smiling in Tompkins Square Park. The devotees put the posters up all over town.

Hayagrīva and Mukunda went to discuss the program for the Mantra-Rock Dance with Allen Ginsberg. Allen was already well known as an advocate of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra; in fact, acquaintances would often greet him with "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" when he walked on Haight Street. And he was known to visit and recommend that others visit the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple. Hayagrīva, whose full beard and long hair rivaled Allen's, was concerned about the melody Allen would use when he chanted with Swamiji. "I think the melody you use," Hayagrīva said, "is too difficult for good chanting."

"Maybe," Allen admitted, "but that's the melody I first heard in India. A wonderful lady saint was chanting it. I'm quite accustomed to it, and it's the only one I can sing convincingly."

With only a few days remaining before the Mantra-Rock Dance, Allen came to an early-morning kīrtana at the temple and later joined Śrīla Prabhupāda upstairs in his room. A few devotees were sitting with Prabhupāda eating Indian sweets when Allen came to the door. He and Prabhupāda smiled and exchanged greetings, and Prabhupāda offered him a sweet, remarking that Mr. Ginsberg was up very early.

"Yes," Allen replied, "the phone hasn't stopped ringing since I arrived in San Francisco."

"That is what happens when one becomes famous," said Prabhupāda. "That was the tragedy of Mahatma Gandhi also. Wherever he went, thousands of people would crowd about him, chanting, 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jaya! Mahatma Gandhi ki jaya!' The gentleman could not sleep."

"Well, at least it got me up for kīrtana this morning," said Allen.

"Yes, that is good."

The conversation turned to the upcoming program at the Avalon Ballroom. "Don't you think there's a possibility of chanting a tune that would be more appealing to Western ears?" Allen asked.

"Any tune will do," said Prabhupāda. "Melody is not important. What is important is that you will chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. It can be in the tune of your own country. That doesn't matter."

Prabhupāda and Allen also talked about the meaning of the word hippie, and Allen mentioned something about taking LSD. Prabhupāda replied that LSD created dependence and was not necessary for a person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Kṛṣṇa consciousness resolves everything," Prabhupāda said. "Nothing else is needed."

At the Mantra-Rock Dance there would be a multimedia light show by the biggest names in the art, Ben Van Meter and Roger Hillyard. Ben and Roger were expert at using simultaneous strobe lights, films, and slide shows to fill an auditorium with optical effects reminiscent of LSD visions. Mukunda had given them many slides of Kṛṣṇa to use during the kīrtana. One evening, Ben and Roger came to see Swamiji in his apartment.

Roger Hillyard: He was great. I was really impressed. It wasn't the way he looked, the way he acted, or the way he dressed, but it was his total being. Swamiji was very serene and very humorous, and at the same time obviously very wise and in tune, enlightened. He had the ability to relate to a lot of different kinds of people. I was thinking, "Some of this must be really strange for this person—to come to the United States and end up in the middle of Haight-Ashbury with a storefront for an āśrama and a lot of very strange people around." And yet he was totally right there, right there with everybody.

On the night of the Mantra-Rock Dance, while the stage crew set up equipment and tested the sound system and Ben and Roger organized their light show upstairs, Mukunda and others collected tickets at the door. People lined up all the way down the street and around the block, waiting for tickets at \$2.50 a piece. Attendance would be good, a capacity crowd, and most of the local luminaries were coming. LSD pioneer Timothy Leary arrived and was given a special seat onstage. Swami Kriyananda came, carrying a tamboura. A man wearing a top hat and a suit with a silk sash that said SAN FRANCISCO arrived, claiming to be the mayor. At the door, Mukunda stopped a respectably dressed young man who didn't have a ticket. But then someone tapped Mukunda on the shoulder: "Let him in. It's all right. He's Owsley." Mukunda apologized and submitted, allowing Augustus Owsley Stanley II, folk hero and famous synthesizer of LSD, to enter without a ticket.

Almost everyone who came wore bright or unusual costumes: tribal robes, Mexican ponchos, Indian kurtās, "God's-eyes," feathers, and beads. Some hippies brought their own flutes, lutes, gourds, drums, rattles, horns, and guitars. The Hell's Angels, dirty-haired, wearing jeans, boots, and denim jackets and accompanied by their women, made their entrance, carrying chains, smoking cigarettes, and displaying their regalia of German helmets, emblazoned emblems, and so on—everything but their motorcycles, which they had parked outside.

The devotees began a warm-up kīrtana onstage, dancing the way Swamiji had shown them. Incense poured from the stage and from the corners of the large ballroom. And although most in the audience were high on drugs, the atmosphere was calm; they had come seeking a spiritual experience. As the chanting began, very melodiously, some of the musicians took part by playing their instruments. The light show began: strobe lights flashed, colored balls bounced back and forth to the beat of the music, large blobs of pulsing color splurged across the floor, walls, and ceiling.

A little after eight o'clock, Moby Grape took the stage. With heavy electric guitars, electric bass, and two drummers, they launched into their first number. The large speakers shook the ballroom with their vibrations, and a roar of approval rose from the audience.

Around nine-thirty, Prabhupāda left his Frederick Street apartment and got into the back seat of Harvey's Cadillac. He was dressed in his usual saffron robes, and around his neck he wore a garland

of gardenias, whose sweet aroma filled the car. On the way to the Avalon he talked about the need to open more centers.

At ten o'clock Prabhupāda walked up the stairs of the Avalon, followed by Kīrtanānanda and Raṇacora. As he entered the ballroom, devotees blew conchshells, someone began a drum roll, and the crowd parted down the center, all the way from the entrance to the stage, opening a path for him to walk. With his head held high, Prabhupāda seemed to float by as he walked through the strange milieu, making his way across the ballroom floor to the stage.

Suddenly the light show changed. Pictures of Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes flashed onto the wall: Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna riding together on Arjuna's chariot, Kṛṣṇa eating butter, Kṛṣṇa subduing the whirlwind demon, Kṛṣṇa playing the flute. As Prabhupāda walked through the crowd, everyone stood, applauding and cheering. He climbed the stairs and seated himself softly on a waiting cushion. The crowd quieted.

Looking over at Allen Ginsberg, Prabhupāda said, "You can speak something about the mantra."

Allen began to tell of his understanding and experience with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. He told how Swamiji had opened a storefront on Second Avenue and had chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa in Tompkins Square Park. And he invited everyone to the Frederick Street temple. "I especially recommend the early-morning kīrtanas," he said, "for those who, coming down from LSD, want to stabilize their consciousness on reentry."

Prabhupāda spoke, giving a brief history of the mantra. Then he looked over at Allen again: "You may chant."

Allen began playing his harmonium and chanting into the microphone, singing the tune he had brought from India. Gradually more and more people in the audience caught on and began chanting. As the kīrtana continued and the audience got increasingly enthusiastic, musicians from the various bands came onstage to join in. Raṇacora, a fair drummer, began playing Moby Grape's drums. Some of the bass and other guitar players joined in as the devotees and a large group of hippies mounted the stage. The multicolored oil slicks pulsed, and the balls bounced back and forth to the beat of the mantra, now projected onto the wall: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. As the chanting spread throughout the hall, some of the hippies got to their feet, held hands, and danced.

Allen Ginsberg: We sang Hare Kṛṣṇa all evening. It was absolutely great—an open thing. It was the height of the Haight-Ashbury spiritual enthusiasm. It was the first time that there had been a music scene in San Francisco where everybody could be part of it and participate. Everybody could sing and dance rather than listen to other people sing and dance.

Jānakī: People didn't know what they were chanting for. But to see that many people chanting—even though most of them were intoxicated—made Swamiji very happy. He loved to see the people chanting.

Hayagrīva: Standing in front of the bands, I could hardly hear. But above all, I could make out the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, building steadily. On the wall behind, a slide projected a huge picture of Kṛṣṇa in a golden helmet with a peacock feather, a flute in His hand.

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda stood up, lifted his arms, and began to dance. He gestured for everyone to join him, and those who were still seated stood up and began dancing and chanting and swaying back and forth, following Prabhupāda's gentle dance.

Roger Segal: The ballroom appeared as if it was a human field of wheat blowing in the wind. It produced a calm feeling in contrast to the Avalon Ballroom atmosphere of gyrating energies. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa continued for over an hour, and finally everyone was jumping and yelling, even crying and shouting.

Someone placed a microphone before Śrīla Prabhupāda, and his voice resounded strongly over the powerful sound system. The tempo quickened. Śrīla Prabhupāda was perspiring profusely. Kīrtanānanda insisted that the kīrtana stop. Swamiji was too old for this, he said; it might be harmful. But the chanting continued, faster and faster, until the words of the mantra finally became indistinguishable amidst the amplified music and the chorus of thousands of voices.

Then suddenly it ended. And all that could be heard was the loud hum of the amplifiers and Śrīla Prabhupāda's voice, ringing out, offering obeisances to his spiritual master: "Om Viṣṇupāda Paramahāṁsa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswami Mahārāja ki jaya!... All glories to the assembled devotees!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda made his way offstage, through the heavy smoke and crowds, and down the front stairs, with Kīrtanānanda and Raṇacora close behind him. Allen announced the next rock group.

As Swamiji left the ballroom and the appreciative crowd behind, he commented, "This is no place for a brahmācārī."

The next morning the temple was crowded with young people who had seen Swamiji at the Avalon. Most of them had stayed up all night. Śrīla Prabhupāda, having followed his usual morning schedule, came down at seven, held kīrtana, and delivered the morning lecture.

Later that morning, while riding to the beach with Kīrtanānanda and Hayagrīva, Swamiji asked how many people had attended last night's kīrtana. When they told him, he asked how much money they had made, and they said they weren't sure but it was approximately fifteen hundred dollars.

Half-audibly he chanted in the back seat of the car, looking out the window as quiet and unassuming as a child, with no indication that the night before he had been cheered and applauded by thousands of hippies, who had stood back and made a grand aisle for him to walk in triumph across the strobe-lit floor amid the thunder of the electric basses and pounding drums of the Avalon Ballroom. For all the fanfare of the night before, he remained untouched, the same as ever in personal demeanor: he was aloof, innocent, and humble, while at the same time appearing very grave and ancient. As Kīrtanānanda and Hayagrīva were aware, Swamiji was not of this world. They knew that he, unlike them, was always thinking of Kṛṣṇa.

They walked with him along the boardwalk, near the ocean, with its cool breezes and cresting waves. Kīrtanānanda spread the cādar over Prabhupāda's shoulders. "In Bengali there is one nice verse," Prabhupāda remarked, breaking his silence. "I remember. 'Oh, what is that voice across the sea calling, calling: Come here, come here...'" Speaking little, he walked the boardwalk with his two friends, frequently looking out at the sea and sky. As he walked he softly sang a mantra that Kīrtanānanda and Hayagrīva had never heard before: "Govinda jaya jaya, gopāla jaya jaya, rādhā-ramaṇa hari, govinda jaya jaya." He sang slowly, in a deep voice, as they walked along the boardwalk. He looked out at the Pacific Ocean: "Because it is great, it is tranquil."

"The ocean seems to be eternal," Hayagrīva ventured.

"No," Prabhupāda replied. "Nothing in the material world is eternal."

* * *

In New York, since there were so few women present at the temple, people had inquired whether it were possible for a woman to join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But in San Francisco that question never arose. Most of the men who came to learn from Swamiji came with their girl friends. To Prabhupāda these boys and girls, eager for chanting and hearing about Kṛṣṇa, were like sparks of faith to be fanned into steady, blazing fires of devotional life. There was no question of his asking the newcomers to give up their girl friends or boyfriends, and yet he uncompromisingly preached, "no illicit sex." The dilemma, however, seemed to have an obvious solution: marry the couples in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Because traditionally a sannyāsī would never arrange or perform marriages, by Indian standards someone might criticize Prabhupāda for allowing any mingling of the sexes. But Prabhupāda gave priority to spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. What Indian, however critical, had ever tried to transplant the essence of India's spiritual culture into the Western culture? Prabhupāda saw that to change the American social system and completely separate the men from the women would not be possible. But to compromise his standard of no illicit sex was also not possible. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa conscious married life, the gr̥hastha-āśrama, would be the best arrangement for many of his new aspiring disciples. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness husband and wife could live together and help one another in spiritual progress. It was an authorized arrangement for allowing a man and woman to associate. If as spiritual master he found it necessary to perform marriages himself, he would do it. But first these young couples would have to become attracted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Joan Campanella had grown up in a wealthy suburb of Portland, Oregon, where her father was a corporate tax attorney. She and her sister had had their own sports cars and their own boats for sailing on Lake Oswego. Disgusted by the sorority life at the University of Oregon, Joan had dropped out during her first term and enrolled at Reed College, where she had studied ceramics, weaving, and calligraphy. In 1963, she had moved to San Francisco and become the co-owner of a ceramics shop. Although she had then had many friends among fashionable shopkeepers, folksingers, and dancers, she had remained aloof and introspective.

It was through her sister Jan that Joan had first met Śrīla Prabhupāda. Jan had gone with her boyfriend Michael Grant to live in New York City, where Michael had worked as a music arranger. In 1965 they had met Swamiji while he was living alone on the Bowery, and they had become his initiated disciples (Mukunda and Jānakī). Swamiji had asked them to get married, and they had invited Joan to the wedding. As a wedding guest for one day, Joan had then briefly entered Swamiji's transcendental world at 26 Second Avenue, and he had kept her busy all day making dough and filling kacaurī pastries for the wedding feast. Joan had worked in one room, and Swamiji had worked in the kitchen, although he had repeatedly come in and guided her in making the kacaurīs properly, telling her not to touch her clothes or body while cooking and instructing her not to smoke cigarettes, because the food was to be offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa and therefore had to be prepared purely. Joan had been convinced by this brief association that Swamiji was a great spiritual teacher, but she had returned to San Francisco without pursuing Kṛṣṇa consciousness further.

A few months later, Mukunda and Jānakī had driven to the West Coast with plans of going soon to India but had changed their plans when Mukunda had received a letter from Swamiji asking him to try to start a Kṛṣṇa conscious temple in California. Mukunda had talked about Swamiji to Joan and other friends, and he had found that a lot of young people were interested. Joan had then accompanied Mukunda, Jānakī, and a boy named Roger Segal to the mountains in Oregon, where they had visited their mutual friends Sam and Marjorie, who had been living in a forest lookout tower.

Mukunda had explained what he had known of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the six of them had begun chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa together. They had been especially interested in Swamiji's teachings about elevating consciousness without drugs. Mukunda had talked excitedly about Swamiji's having asked him to start a temple in California, and soon he and his wife, Jānakī; Sam and his girl friend Marjorie; and Roger and Joan, now intimate friends, had moved to an apartment in San Francisco to find a storefront and set the stage for Swamiji.

After Swamiji's arrival, Joan had begun attending the temple kīrtanas. She felt drawn to Swamiji and the chanting, and she especially liked the informal visiting hours. Swamiji would sit in his rocking chair with his hand in his bead bag, chanting the holy names, and Joan would sit fascinated, watching his fingers moving within the bag.

One day during Swamiji's visiting hours, while Swamiji was sitting in his rocking chair and Joan and others were sitting at his feet, Jānakī's cat crept in through the hallway door and began slowly coming down the hallway. The cat came closer and closer and slowly meandered right in front of Swamiji's feet. It sat down, looking up intently at Swamiji, and began to meow. None of the devotees knew what to expect. Swamiji began gently stroking the back of the cat with his foot, saying, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa. Are you feeding him prasādam milk?"

Joan: I was touched by Swamiji's activities and his kindness—even to cats—and I longed for more association with him.

Joan came to understand that serving Swamiji was a serious matter. But she didn't want to jump into initiation until she was one-hundred-percent sure about it. Sometimes she would cry in

ecstasy, and sometimes she would fall asleep during Swamiji's lecture. So she remained hesitant and skeptical, wondering, "How can I actually apply Swamiji's teachings to my life?"

One evening Swamiji asked her, "When are you going to be initiated?" Joan said that she didn't know but that she relished reading his books and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. She said that because she was attracted to the mountains and to elevated spiritual consciousness, she wanted to travel to Tibet.

Swamiji, sitting in his rocking chair, looked down at Joan as she sat at his feet. She felt he was looking right through her. "I can take you to a higher place than Tibet," he said. "Just see."

Joan suddenly felt that Swamiji knew everything about her, and she understood, "Oh, I have to see through his eyes what Kṛṣṇa consciousness is." He was promising that he would take her to some very elevated realm, but she would have to see it. It was then that Joan decided to become Swamiji's disciple.

When she told her boyfriend Roger, he was astounded. He and Joan had been coming to the kīrtanas and lectures together, but he still had doubts. Maybe it would be good for him and Joan to get married but not initiated. Joan, however, was more determined. She explained to Roger that Swamiji hadn't come just to perform marriages; you had to get initiated first.

Roger Segal had grown up in New York. He was following a haṭha-yoga guru, had experimented with psychedelic chemicals, and had traveled in the Deep South as a civil rights activist, taking part in freedom marches with the blacks. Large-bodied, sociable, and outgoing, he had lots of friends in San Francisco. At the airport, in a merry mood with the Haight-Ashbury crowd, he had seen Swamiji for the first time and been especially struck by Swamiji's regal bearing and absence of self-consciousness. The concept of reincarnation had always intrigued him, but after attending some of Swamiji's lectures and hearing him explain transmigration of the soul, he felt he had found someone who definitely knew the answer to any question about life after death.

One night, after attending the program at the temple, Roger returned to his apartment and sat down on the fire escape to meditate on what Swamiji had said. The world is false, he had said. "But it feels real to me," Roger thought. "If I pinch my arm, I feel pain. So how is that illusion? This fire escape is real; otherwise I would be falling in space. This space is real, isn't it?"

Roger decided he didn't understand what Swamiji meant by illusion. "If I try to walk through the wall," he thought, "would that be real or not? Maybe the wall's reality is just in my mind." To test the illusion he went inside his apartment, concentrated his mind, and walked against the wall—smack. He sat down again and thought, "What does Swamiji mean when he says that the world is illusion?" He decided he should ask at the next meeting.

He did. And Śrīla Prabhupāda told him that actually the world is real, because it was created by God, the supreme reality. But it is unreal in the sense that everything material is temporary. When a person takes the temporary world to be permanent and all in all, he is in illusion. Only the spiritual world, Swamiji explained, is eternal and therefore real.

Roger was satisfied by Swamiji's answer. But he had other difficulties: he thought Swamiji too conservative. When Swamiji said that people's dogs must be kept outside the temple, Roger didn't like it. Many visitors brought pet dogs with them to the temple, and now there was a hitching post in front of the building just to accommodate the pets on leashes. But Swamiji wouldn't allow any pets inside. "This philosophy is for humans," he said. "A cat or dog cannot understand it, although if he hears the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa he can receive a higher birth in the future."

Roger also had other points of contention with what he considered Swamiji's conservative philosophy. Swamiji repeatedly spoke against uncontrolled habits like smoking, but Roger couldn't imagine giving up such things. And the instructions about restricting sex life especially bothered him. Yet despite his not following very strictly, Roger felt himself developing a love for Swamiji and Kṛṣṇa. He sensed that Swamiji had much to teach him and that Swamiji was doing it in a certain way and a certain order. Roger knew that Swamiji saw him as a baby in spiritual life who had to be spoonfed; he knew he had to become submissive and accept whatever Swamiji gave him.

Sam Speerstra, tall and slender with curly reddish-gold hair, was athletic (he had trained as an Olympic skier) yet artistic (he was a writer and wood sculptor). He had graduated from Reed College in Oregon and gone on as a Fulbright scholar to a small college in Switzerland, where he had obtained an M.A. in philosophy. He was popular—as Mukunda saw him, "the epitome of the rugged individualist."

When Mukunda had visited Sam at his mountain lookout tower and told him about Swamiji and Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Sam had been intrigued by the new ideas. Sam's life had nearly reached a dead end, but he had seen hope in what Mukunda and Jānakī had been saying about Swamiji. After spending only a few days with Mukunda, Sam had been eager to help him establish a temple of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in San Francisco.

Sam was the one who knew the local rock stars and had persuaded them to appear at the Avalon with Swami Bhaktivedanta, whom he had never met. Sam had seen Swamiji for the first time when Swamiji had arrived at the San Francisco airport; and Sam had later insisted that he had seen a flash of light come from Swamiji's body.

At first Sam had been afraid to say anything, nor had he known what to say—Prabhupāda was completely new to him and seemed so elevated. But the day after the program at the Avalon, when Mukunda told Prabhupāda that Sam had arranged the dance, Prabhupāda sent for him to find out how much money they had made. Sitting across from Prabhupāda, who sat behind his small desk, Sam informed him that they had made about fifteen hundred dollars profit. "Well then," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "you will be the treasurer." Then Śrīla Prabhupāda asked him, "What is your idea of God?"

"God is one," Sam replied.

Prabhupāda asked, "What is the purpose of worshiping God?"

Sam replied, "To become one with God."

"No," Prabhupāda said. "You cannot become one with God. God and you are always two different individuals. But you can become one in interest with Him." And then he told Sam about Kṛṣṇa. After they talked, Prabhupāda said, "You can come up every day, and I will teach you how to do books." So Sam began meeting with Prabhupāda for half an hour a day to learn bookkeeping.

Sam: I had never been very good at keeping books, and I really didn't want to do it. But it was a good excuse to come and see Swamiji every day. He would chew me out when I would spend too much money or when I couldn't balance the books properly. I really loved the idea that he was so practical that he knew bookkeeping. He became so much more of a friend from the beginning, rather than some idealized person from another sphere of life. I took almost all my practical questions to him. I learned to answer things for myself based on the way Swamiji always answered day-to-day problems. And the first thing he made me do was to get married to my girl friend.

Mukunda and his wife, Jānakī, whose apartment was just down the hall from Śrīla Prabhupāda's, were the only couple Śrīla Prabhupāda had already initiated and married. Mukunda, who often wore his strand of large red japa beads in two loose loops around his neck, had grown long hair and a short, thick black beard since coming to San Francisco. He had entered the "summer of love" spirit of Haight-Ashbury and was acquainted with many of the popular figures. Although occasionally earning money as a musician, he spent most of his time promoting Prabhupāda's mission, especially by meeting people to arrange gala programs like the one at the Avalon. He was a leader in bringing people to assist Prabhupāda, yet he had no permanent sense of commitment. He was helping because it was fun. Having little desire to be different from his many San Francisco friends, he did not strictly follow Prabhupāda's principles for regulated spiritual life.

In his exchanges with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Mukunda liked to assume a posture of fraternal camaraderie rather than one of menial servitude, and Śrīla Prabhupāda reciprocated. Sometimes, however, Prabhupāda would assert himself as the teacher. Once when Prabhupāda walked into Mukunda's apartment, he noticed a poster on the wall showing a matador with a cape and sword going after a bull. "This is a horrible picture!" Śrīla Prabhupāda exclaimed, his face showing displeasure. Mukunda looked at the poster, realizing for the first time what it meant. "Yes, it is horrible," he said, and tore it off the wall.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was eager to have someone play the mṛdaṅga properly during the kīrtanas, and Mukunda, a musician, was a likely candidate.

Mukunda: The day the drum came I asked Swamiji if I could learn, and he said yes. I asked him when, and he said, "When do you want?" "Now?" I asked. He said, "Yes." I was a little surprised to get such a quick appointment. But I brought the drum to his room, and he began to show me the basic beat. First there was gee ta ta, gee ta ta, gee ta ta. And then one slightly more complicated beat, gee ta ta, gee ta ta, gee ta ta geeee ta.

As I began to play the beat, I kept speeding it up, and he kept telling me to slow down. He spent a lot of time just showing me how to strike the heads of the drum. Then I finally began to get it a little. But he had to keep admonishing me to slow down and pronounce the syllables as I hit the drum—gee ta ta. The syllables, he said, and the drum should sound the same. I should make it sound like that and always pronounce them.

I was determined and played very slowly for a long, long time. I was concentrating with great intensity. Then suddenly I was aware of Swamiji standing motionless beside me. I didn't know how long he was going to stand there without saying anything, and I became a little uncomfortable. But I continued playing. When I got up the courage to look up and see his face, to my surprise he was moving his head back and forth in an affirming way with his eyes closed. He seemed to be enjoying the lesson. This came as a complete surprise to me. Although I had taken music lessons before and had spent many years taking piano lessons, I can never remember an instance when the teacher seemed to actually enjoy my playing. I felt very wonderful to see that here was a teacher who was so perfect, who enjoyed what he was teaching so much, not because it was his personal teaching or his personal method, but because he was witnessing Kṛṣṇa's energy pass through him to a conditioned soul like myself. And he was getting great pleasure out of it. I had a deeper realization that Swamiji was a real teacher, although I had no idea what a spiritual master really was.

To Mukunda's wife, Jānakī, Kṛṣṇa consciousness meant dealing in a personal way with Swamiji. As long as he was around she was all right. She enjoyed asking him questions, serving him, and learning from him how to cook. She didn't care much for studying the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but she quickly developed an intense attraction for him.

Jānakī: There were a group of us sitting around in Swamiji's apartment, and I asked him if he had any children. He looked at me as if I had said something strange, and he said, "You are not my child?" I said, "Well, yes." And he said, "Are not all these my children?" And his answer was so quick that I never doubted that he seriously meant what he said.

For several hours each morning Prabhupāda showed Jānakī, Joan, and others how to cook. One day in the kitchen he noticed a kind of berry he had never tasted, and he asked Jānakī what they were. She told him strawberries. He immediately popped one into his mouth, saying, "That's very tasty." And he proceeded to eat another and another, exclaiming, "Very tasty!"

One time Jānakī was making whipped cream when Prabhupāda came into the kitchen and asked, "What's that?"

She replied, "It's whipped cream."

"What is whipped cream?" he asked.

"It's cream," she replied, "but when you beat it, it fluffs up into a more solid form."

Although always adamant about kitchen rules (one of the most important being that no one could eat in the kitchen), Śrīla Prabhupāda immediately dipped his finger into the whipped cream and tasted it. "This is yogurt," he said.

In a lighthearted, reprimanding way that was her pleasure, Jānakī replied, "No, Swamiji, it's whipped cream."

Śrīla Prabhupāda corrected her, "No, it is yogurt." And again he put his finger into it and tasted it, saying, "Oh, it tastes very nice."

"Swamiji!" Jānakī accused him. "You're eating in the kitchen!" Śrīla Prabhupāda merely smiled and shook his head back and forth, saying, "That is all right."

Jānakī: One time I told him, "Swamiji, I had the most exciting dream. We were all on a planet of our very own, and everybody from earth had come there. They had all become pure devotees, and they were all chanting. You were sitting on a very special chair high off the ground, and the whole earth was clapping and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa." Swamiji smiled and said, "Oh, that's such a lovely dream."

Bonnie McDonald, age nineteen, and her boyfriend Gary McElroy, twenty, had both come to San Francisco from Austin, where they had been living together as students at the University of Texas. Bonnie was a slight, fair blonde with a sweet southern drawl. She was born and raised in southeast Texas in a Baptist family. In high school she had become agnostic, but later, while traveling in Europe and studying the religious art there and the architecture of the great cathedrals, she had concluded that these great artists couldn't have been completely wrong.

Gary, the son of a U.S. Air Force officer, had been raised in Germany, Okinawa, and other places around the world before his family had settled in Texas. His dark hair and bushy brows gave him a scowling look, except when he smiled. He was one of the first students at the University of Texas to wear long hair and experiment with psychedelic drugs. While taking LSD together, he and Bonnie had become obsessed with the idea of going on a spiritual search, and without notifying their parents or school they had driven to the West Coast "in search of someone who could teach us about spiritual life."

They had spent a few frustrating months searching through spiritual books and amongst spiritual groups in Haight-Ashbury. They had become vegetarians. Gary had started teaching himself to play electric guitar while Bonnie had gone to Golden Gate Park every day to perform a self-styled haṭha-yoga meditation. But gradually they had become disillusioned and had felt themselves becoming degraded from drugs.

When the disciple is ready, the guru will appear, they had read; and they had waited eagerly for the day when their guru would come. Although Bonnie had spent most of her time in the parks of San Francisco, one day she had been looking through a tableful of magazines in a Haight-Ashbury head shop when she had found a copy of *Back to Godhead*, the mimeographed journal produced by Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples in New York. She had been particularly attracted to Hayagrīva's article about Swamiji. The descriptions of Swamiji's smile, his bright eyes, his pointy-toed shoes, and the things he said had given her a feeling that this might be the guru she had been looking for. And when she had learned that this same Swamiji had opened an āśrama in Haight-Ashbury, she had immediately started searching through the neighborhood until she had found the temple on Frederick Street.

Before Bonnie and Gary met Swamiji they had both been troubled. Gary was in anxiety about the threat of being drafted into the Army, and both of them were disillusioned because they had not

found the truth they had come to San Francisco to find. So on meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda in his room they began to explain their situation.

Bonnie: He was sitting in a rocking chair in his little apartment, and he looked at us like we were crazy—because we were—and said, “You come to my classes. Simply come to my classes every morning and every evening, and everything will be all right.” That sounded to us like an unbelievable panacea, but because we were so bewildered, we agreed to it.

I told him I had traveled all over Europe, and he said, “Oh, you have traveled so much.” And I said to him, “Yes, I have traveled so much, I have done so many things, but none of it ever made me happy.” He was pleased with that statement. He said, “Yes, that is the problem.”

We began going to his morning lectures. For us it was a long distance to get there at seven in the morning, but we did it every morning with the conviction that this was what he had said to do and we were going to do it. Then one day he asked us, “What do you do?” When we said that formerly we had been art students at college, he told us to paint pictures of Kṛṣṇa. Shortly after that, we asked to be initiated.

Joan and Roger were soon initiated, receiving the names Yamunā and Guru dāsa. And the very next day they were married. At their wedding ceremony, Swamiji presided, wearing a bulky garland of leaves and rhododendron flowers. He sat on a cushion on the temple floor, surrounded by his followers and paraphernalia for the sacrificial fire. Before him was the small mound of earth where he would later build the fire. He explained the meaning of Kṛṣṇa conscious marriage and how husband and wife should assist one another and serve Kṛṣṇa, keeping Him in the center. Swamiji had commented that he did not like the Western women's dress, and at his request, Yamunā was dressed in a sārī.

Although Swamiji had called for ghee (clarified butter) as one of the sacrificial ingredients, the devotees, thinking ghee too costly, had substituted melted margarine. He had called for firewood also, and the devotees had supplied him the bits of a broken orange crate. Now, with Yamunā and Guru dāsa seated before him on the opposite side of the mound of earth, he picked up a small piece of the splintered orange crate, dipped it into what was supposed to be ghee, and held it in the candle flame to begin the fire. The splinter flamed, sputtered, and went out. He picked up another splinter and moistened it in the melted margarine, but when he touched it to the flame it made the same svit-svit sound and sputtered out. After trying unsuccessfully four or five times, Swamiji looked up and said, “This marriage will have a very slow start.” Yamunā began to cry.

Bonnie and Gary were initiated just two weeks after they had met Swamiji. Bonnie's initiated name was Govinda dāsī, and Gary's was Gaurasundara. Although still dressed in blue jeans, even at their initiation, and not professing to know much of what was going on, they had confidence in Swamiji. They knew that their minds were still hazy from drugs, but they took their initiation seriously and became strict followers. Gaurasundara threw out whatever marijuana he had, and he and Govinda dāsī began eating only food they had offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Two weeks after their initiation, Swamiji conducted their marriage ceremony.

On the evening of the wedding Govinda dāśī's father came from Texas, even though he objected to Kṛṣṇa consciousness as radically un-American. Walking up to Śrīla Prabhupāda's seat in the temple, Govinda dāśī's father asked, "Why do ya have to change my daughter's name? Why does she have to have an Indian name?"

Prabhupāda looked at him and then, with a mischievous gleam, looked at Mr. Patel, an Indian guest standing nearby with his family. "You don't like Indians?" he asked.

Everyone who heard Swamiji laughed—except for Govinda dāśī's father, who replied, "Well, yeah, they're all right. But why does Bonnie have to have a different name?"

"Because she has asked me to give her one," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied. "If you love her, you will like what she likes. Your daughter is happy. Why do you object?" The discussion ended there, and Govinda dāśī's father remained civil. Later he enjoyed taking prasādam with his daughter and son-in-law.

Govinda dāśī: Gaurasundara and I set about reading the three volumes of Swamiji's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. And at the same time Swamiji had told me to paint a large canvas of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and a cow. So every day for the whole day I would paint, and Gaurasundara would read out loud from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—one volume after another. We did this continuously for two months. During this time Swamiji also asked me to do a portrait of him standing before a background painting of Lord Caitanya dancing. Swamiji wanted it so that Lord Caitanya's foot would be touching his head. I tried. It was a pretty horrible painting, and yet he was happy with it.

Prabhupāda's thoughtful followers felt that some of the candidates for initiation did not intend to fulfill the exclusive lifelong commitment a disciple owes to his guru. "Swamiji," they would say, "some of these people come only for their initiation. We have never seen them before, and we never see them again." Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that that was the risk he had to take. One day in a lecture in the temple, he explained that although the reactions for a disciple's past sins are removed at initiation, the spiritual master remains responsible until the disciple is delivered from the material world. Therefore, he said, Lord Caitanya warned that a guru should not accept many disciples.

One night in the temple during the question-and-answer session, a big, bearded fellow raised his hand and asked Prabhupāda, "Can I become initiated?"

The brash public request annoyed some of Prabhupāda's followers, but Prabhupāda was serene. "Yes," he replied. "But first you must answer two questions. Who is Kṛṣṇa?"

The boy thought for a moment and said, "Kṛṣṇa is God."

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "And who are you?"

Again the boy thought for a few moments and then replied, "I am the servant of God."

"Very good," Prabhupāda said. "Yes, you can be initiated tomorrow."

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew that it would be difficult for his Western disciples to stick to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and attain the goal of pure devotional service. All their lives they had had the worst of training, and despite their nominal Christianity and philosophical searching, most of them knew nothing of the science of God. They did not even know that illicit sex and meat-eating were wrong, although when he told them they accepted what he said. And they freely chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa. So how could he refuse them?

Of course, whether they would be able to persevere in Kṛṣṇa consciousness despite the ever-present attractions of māyā would be seen in time. Some would fall—that was the human tendency. But some would not. At least those who sincerely followed his instructions to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and avoid sinful activities would be successful. He gave the example that a person could say that today's fresh food, if not properly used, would spoil in a few days. But if it is fresh now, to say that in the future it will be misused and therefore spoil is only a surmise. Yes, in the future anyone could fall down. But Prabhupāda took it as his responsibility to engage his disciples now. And he was giving them the methods which if followed would protect them from ever falling down.

Aside from Vedic standards, even by the standard of Swamiji's New York disciples the devotees in San Francisco were not very strict. Some continued going to the doughnut shop, eating food without offering it to Kṛṣṇa, and eating forbidden things like chocolate and commercial ice cream. Some even indulged in after-kīrtana cigarette breaks right outside the temple door. Some got initiated without knowing precisely what they had agreed to practice.

Kīrtanānanda: The mood in San Francisco was a lot more relaxed. The devotees liked to go to the corner and have their coffee and doughnuts. But Prabhupāda loved the way so many people were coming. And he loved the program at the Avalon Ballroom. But there were two sides: those who strictly followed the rules and regulations and emphasized purity and then those who were not so concerned about strictness but who wanted to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness as widely as possible. Swamiji was so great that he embraced both groups.

Michael Wright, twenty-one, had recently gotten out of the Marine Corps, and Nancy Grindle, eighteen, was fresh out of high school. They had met in college in Los Angeles. Feeling frustrated and in need of something tangible to which to dedicate their lives, they had come to San Francisco to join the hippies. But they soon realized that they and the Haight-Ashbury hippies, whom they found dirty, aimless, unproductive, and lost in their search for identity, had little in common. So Nancy took a job as a secretary for the telephone company, and Michael found work as a lineman for the electric company. Then they heard about the Swami in Haight-Ashbury and decided to visit the temple.

It was an evening kīrtana, and the irrepressible hippies were twirling, twisting, and wiggling. Michael and Nancy took a seat on the floor off to one side, impressed more by the presence of the Swami than by the kīrtana. After the kīrtana Prabhupāda lectured, but they found his accent heavy. They wanted to understand—they had an innate feeling that he was saying something valuable—and yet the secrets seemed locked behind a thick accent and within a book written in another language. They decided to come back in the morning and try again.

At the morning program they found a smaller group: a dozen devotees with beads for chanting draped around their necks, a few street people. The kīrtana seemed sweeter and more mellow, and Michael and Nancy chanted and danced along with the devotees. Then Prabhupāda spoke, and this time they caught a few of his ideas. They stayed for breakfast and became friends with Mukunda and Jānakī, Sam and Marjorie (now Śyāmasundara and Mālatī), Yamunā and Guru dāsa, and Govinda dāsī and Gaurasundara. They liked the devotees and promised to come again that evening. Soon they were regularly attending the morning and evening programs, and Nancy, along with the other women, was attending Prabhupāda's weekend cooking classes.

Michael was open to Prabhupāda's ideas, but he had difficulty accepting the necessity of surrendering to a spiritual authority. His tendency was to reject authorities. But the more he thought about it, the more he saw that Prabhupāda was right—he had to accept an authority. He reasoned, “Every time I stop at a red light, I'm accepting an authority.” And finally he concluded that to progress in spiritual understanding he would have to accept a spiritual authority. Yet because he didn't want to accept it, he was in a dilemma. Finally, after hearing Prabhupāda's lectures for two weeks, Michael decided to surrender to Prabhupāda's authority and try to become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Michael: Nancy and I decided to get married and become Swamiji's disciples and members of his Society. We told some of the devotees, “We would like to see Swamiji.” They said, “Yes, just go up. He's on the third floor.” We were a little surprised that there were no formalities required, and when we got to the door his servant Raṇacora let us in. We went in with our shoes on, so Raṇacora had to ask us to take them off.

I didn't know exactly what to say to Swamiji—I was depending on my future wife to make the initial opening—but then I finally said, “We came because we would like to become members of your Kṛṣṇa conscious Society.” He said this was very nice. Then I said that actually the main reason we were there was that we wanted to be married. We knew that he performed marriage ceremonies and that it was part of the Society's requirements that couples had to be duly married before they could live together. Swamiji asked me if I liked the philosophy and if I had a job. My answer to both questions was yes. He explained that first of all we would have to be initiated, and then we could be married the next month.

At their initiation Michael received the name Dayānanda, and Nancy received the name Nandarāṇī. Soon Prabhupāda performed their marriage.

Nandarāṇī: We knew it would be a very big wedding. In Haight-Ashbury, whenever Swamiji would perform a wedding hundreds of people would come, and the temple would be filled. My parents were coming, and Dayānanda's parents were also coming.

Swamiji said that it was proper that I cook. He said I should come to his apartment on the morning of the wedding and he would help me cook something for the wedding feast. So that morning I put on my best jeans and my best sweatshirt and my boots, and I went off to Swamiji's apartment. When I got upstairs I walked in with my boots on. Swamiji was sitting there in his rocking chair.

He smiled at me and said, "Oh, you have come to cook." I said, "Yes." He sat there and looked at me—one of those long silent stares. He said, "First take off the boots."

After I took off my boots and my old leather jacket, Swamiji got up and went into the kitchen. He got a very large pot that had been burned so thick on the bottom that practically there was no metal visible. He handed it to me and said, "We want to boil milk in this pot. It has to be washed."

There wasn't a sink in Swamiji's kitchen, only a teeny round basin. So I went into the bathroom, put the pot in the bathtub, and rinsed it out. I assumed Swamiji didn't want the black off the bottom, because it was burned on. So I brought it back to him, and he said, "Oh, that is very clean, but just take off this little black on the bottom here."

I said okay and got a knife and crawled into the bathtub and started scrubbing the black off. I worked and worked and worked, and I scrubbed and scrubbed. I had cleanser up to my elbows, and I made a mess everywhere. I had gotten about half the black off—the rest seemed to be more or less an integral part of the bottom—so I took the pot back to Swamiji and said, "This is the best I can do. All of this is burned on." He said, "Yes, yes, you've done a wonderful job. Now just take off this black that's left."

So I went back into the bathtub and scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed. It was almost midday when I came out of the bathtub with all the black scrubbed off the bottom of that pot. He was so happy when I brought the pot in. It was sparkling. A big smile came on his face, and he said, "Oh, this is perfect." I was exhausted.

Then Swamiji welcomed me into his kitchen and taught me how to make rasagullās. We boiled the milk, curdled it, and then I sat down and began rolling the curd into balls on a tray. As I rolled the balls I would put them in a little row along the tray. And every single ball had to be exactly the same size. Swamiji would take his thumb and first and second fingers and shoot the balls out of the row when they weren't the right size. And I would have to remake them until they were the right size. This went on until I had a full tray of balls all the same size.

Then Swamiji showed me how to boil the balls of curd in sugar water. Mālatī, Jānakī, and I were cooking in the kitchen, and Swamiji was singing.

At one point, Swamiji stopped singing and asked me, "Do you know what your name means?" I couldn't even remember what my name was. He had told me at initiation, but because none of us used our devotee names, I couldn't remember what mine was. I said, "No, Swamiji, what does my name mean?" He said, "It means you are the mother of Kṛṣṇa." And he laughed loudly and went back to stirring the rasagullās. I couldn't understand who Kṛṣṇa was, who in the world His mother would be, or how I was in any way related to her. But I was satisfied that Swamiji felt that I was somebody worth being.

I finished cooking that afternoon about four o'clock, and then I went home to get dressed for the wedding. Although I had never worn anything but old dresses and jeans, Swamiji had suggested to

the other ladies that they find a way to put me into a sārī for the wedding. So we bought a piece of silk to use for a sārī. I went to Mālātī's house. She was going to try to help me put it on. I couldn't keep it on, so she had to sew it on me. Then they decorated me with flowers and took me to Swamiji and showed him. He was very happy. He said, "This is the way our women should always look. No more jeans and dresses. They should always wear sārīs."

Actually, I looked a fright—I kept stumbling, and they had had to sew the cloth on me—but Swamiji thought it was wonderful. The cloth was all one color, so Swamiji said, "Next time you should buy cloth that has a little border on the bottom, so it's two colors. I like two colors better."

When we went downstairs to the wedding, Swamiji met my relatives. He spoke to them very politely. My mother cried a lot during the ceremony. I was very satisfied that she had been blessed by meeting Swamiji.

Steve Bohlert, age twenty, born and raised in New York and now living the hippie life in San Francisco, had read in *The Oracle* about Swami Bhaktivedanta's coming to San Francisco. The idea of meeting an Indian swami had interested him, and responding to a notice he had seen posted on Haight Street, he had gone along with Carolyn Gold, the woman he was living with, to the airport to meet Swami Bhaktivedanta. He and Carolyn had both gotten a blissful lift by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and seeing Prabhupāda, and they began regularly attending the lectures and kīrtanas at the temple. Steve decided he wanted to become like the Swami, so he and Carolyn went together to see Prabhupāda and request initiation. Speaking privately with Prabhupāda in his room, they discussed obedience to the spiritual master and becoming vegetarian. When Prabhupāda told them that they should either stop living together or get married, they said they would like to get married. An initiation date was set.

Prabhupāda asked Steve to shave his long hair and beard. "Why do you want me to shave my head?" Steve protested. "Kṛṣṇa had long hair, Rāma had long hair, Lord Caitanya had long hair, and Christ had long hair. Why should I shave my head?"

Prabhupāda smiled and replied, "Because now you are following me." There was a print on the wall of Sūradāsa, a Vaiṣṇava. "You should shave your head like that," Prabhupāda said, pointing to Sūradāsa.

"I don't think I'm ready to do that yet," Steve said.

"All right, you are still a young man. There is still time. But at least you should shave your face clean and cut your hair like a man."

On the morning of the initiation, Steve shaved off his beard and cut his hair around his ears so that it was short in front—but long in the back.

"How's this?" he asked.

"You should cut the back also," Prabhupāda replied. Steve agreed.

To Steve Prabhupāda gave the name Subala and to Carolyn the name Kṛṣṇā-devī. A few days later he performed their wedding.

Since each ceremony was another occasion for kīrtana and prasādam distribution, onlookers became attracted. And as the spiritual names and married couples increased with each ceremony, Prabhupāda's spiritual family grew. The harmonious atmosphere was like that of a small, loving family, and Prabhupāda dealt with his disciples intimately, without the formalities of an institution or hierarchy.

Disciples would approach him for various reasons, entering the little apartment to be alone with him as he sat on a mat before his makeshift desk in the morning sunlight. With men like Mukunda, Guru dāsa, and Śyāmasundara, Swamiji was a friend. With Jānakī and Govinda dāsī he was sometimes ready to be chided, almost like their naughty son, or he would be their grandfatherly teacher of cooking, the enforcer of the rules of kitchen cleanliness. And to all of them he was the unfathomable pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa who knew the conclusions of all the Vedic scriptures and who knew beyond all doubts the truth of transmigration. He could answer all questions. He could lead them beyond material life, beyond Haight-Ashbury hippiedom and into the spiritual world with Kṛṣṇa.

* * *

It was seven P.M. Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the temple dressed in a saffron dhotī, an old turtleneck jersey under a cardigan sweater, and a cādar around his shoulders. Walking to the dais in the rear of the room, he took his seat. The dais, a cushion atop a redwood plank two feet off the floor, was supported between two redwood columns. In front of the dais stood a cloth-covered lectern with a bucket of cut flowers on either side. Covering the wall behind the dais was a typical Indian madras, with Haridāsa's crude painting of Lord Caitanya in kīrtana hanging against it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda picked up his karatālas, wrapped the cloth straps around his forefingers, and looked out at his young followers sitting cross-legged on the burgundy rug. The men were bearded, and almost everyone wore long hair, beads, exotic clothing, and trinkets. The bulbs hanging from the ceiling diffused their light through Japanese paper lanterns, and Navaho "God's-eye" symbols dangled from strings. Prabhupāda began the ringing one-two-three rhythm, and Śyāmasundara began pumping the harmonium. Although the harmonium was a simple instrument—a miniature piano keyboard to be played with the right hand and a bellows to be pumped with the left hand—no one in the Frederick Street storefront knew how to play it, so it became simply "the drone." Another important kīrtana instrument, the two-headed mṛdaṅga from India, was meant for intricate rhythmic accompaniments, but even Mukunda could play it only very simply, matching the one-two-three of Prabhupāda's karatālas.

There were other instruments on hand: a kettledrum (the pride of the temple), Hayagrīva's old cornet, a few conchshells, and a horn Hayagrīva had made by shellacking a piece of kelp he had found on the beach. Some guests had brought their own flutes, pipes, and bongos. But for now they let their instruments remain still and clapped to Prabhupāda's rhythm as he sang the evening prayers.

Prabhupāda's Sanskrit hymn praised the Vaiṣṇava spiritual masters; for each great devotee in the disciplic succession, he sang a specific prayer. First he chanted the poetic description of the transcendental qualities of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, then Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, Bhaktivinoda Thākura—one after another. One prayer described Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta as “the deliverer of the fallen souls,” and another praised Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī as “renunciation personified, always merged in the feeling of separation and intense love for Kṛṣṇa.” Śrīla Prabhupāda sang of Lord Caitanya, the golden-complexioned Supreme Personality of Godhead who distributed pure love of Kṛṣṇa. And he sang of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the ocean of mercy, the friend of the distressed, the source of creation. As Prabhupāda became absorbed in the bhajana, his body trembled with ecstatic emotion. The group on the floor sat swaying from side to side, watching him, his eyes closed in meditation, his delicate, practiced fingers expertly playing the cymbals. They heard the heartfelt minor moods and tones of his voice, unlike anything they had heard before.

Then he began the familiar mantra they had come to hear—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare—and immediately they joined him. The horns and drums sounded, and soon all the other instrument players joined in. Gradually, a few at a time, members of the audience rose to their feet and began to dance. Prabhupāda's followers stood and began stepping from side to side as he had shown them, sometimes raising their hands in the air. Others moved as they pleased. Occasionally opening his eyes and glancing around, Prabhupāda sat firmly, chanting, though his head and body were trembling.

After twenty minutes many of the young dancers were leaping, jumping, and perspiring, as Prabhupāda continued to sing, leading the dancers by the beat of his karatālas. His eyes were closed, yet he controlled the entire wild congregation, playing his karatālas loudly. The chanting and dancing continued, and Prabhupāda approved.

The kīrtana of these hippies was different from the chanting of Indian brāhmaṇas, but Prabhupāda didn't mind—his standard was devotion. In his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple, whatever he accepted, Kṛṣṇa accepted; this was his offering to Kṛṣṇa through his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Prabhupāda was absolutely confident. Even if his young devotees didn't know how to play the harmonium keyboard or the mṛdaṅga, even if they didn't know that congregational kīrtana should be done not in constant unison (as they were doing) but responsively, and even if they didn't know how to honor the guru—still, because they were chanting and dancing, he encouraged them and nodded to them: “Yes.”

Wild elements were there, of course—people whose minds and intentions were far away in some chemically induced fantasy—yet the mood was dominated by Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers, who danced with arms upraised and watched their leader carefully. Although in many ways they were still like hippies, they were Swamiji's disciples, and they wanted to please him and follow his instructions; they wanted to attain Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For all the varied punctuation of horns and timpani, the kīrtana remained sweet; Hayagrīva even played his cornet in tune, and only during every other mantra.

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew that some aspects of the kīrtana were wrong or below standard, but he accepted the offering—and not awkwardly, but lovingly. He simply wanted these American boys and girls to chant. That they dressed irregularly, jumped too savagely, or had the wrong philosophy

did not overconcern him. These boys and girls were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa; so at least for the present, they were pure. The hippies knew that, too. And they loved it.

Just as in Jānakī's dream, Śrīla Prabhupāda's pleasure was to see the whole world engaged in kīrtana. Somehow or other, he would say, people should be engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And this was the instruction of Lord Caitanya's chief follower, Rūpa Gosvāmī, who had written, *tasmāt kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet...* "Somehow or other, fix the mind on Kṛṣṇa; the rules and regulations can come later."

Inherent in this attitude of Śrīla Prabhupāda's and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's was a strong conviction about the purifying force of the holy name; if engaged in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, even the most fallen person could gradually become a saintly devotee. Śrīla Prabhupāda would often quote a verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam affirming that persons addicted to sinful acts could be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord. He knew that every Haight-Ashbury hippie was eligible to receive the mercy of the holy name, and he saw it as his duty to his spiritual master to distribute the gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness freely, rejecting no one. Yet while living amongst these mlecchas, he required a certain standard of behavior, and he was adamant about preserving the purity of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness Society.

For example, if he were going to distribute free food to the public, it could not be ordinary food but must be prasādam, food offered to Kṛṣṇa. Feeding hungry people was futile unless they were given prasādam and the chance of liberation from birth and death. And although in the kīrtanas he allowed openness and free expression and welcomed the wildest participation, the transcendental sound of the holy name had to dominate. He never allowed the kīrtana to degenerate into mere beating on drums or chanting of any old words, nor could anyone in the group become so crazy that others wouldn't be able to hear or take part in congregational chanting.

In his attempts to "somehow or other" get these young people chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda instinctively knew what to allow and what not to allow. He was the master, and his new disciples followed him when he permitted an egoistic, sensual dancer to jump around the temple or a drugged madman to argue with him in a question-and-answer period. When a person was too disruptive, Prabhupāda was not afraid to stop him. But stopping was rare. The main thing was giving.

The kīrtana lasted more than an hour, as the chanters joined hands and danced around the room and incense poured out the front door.

* * *

The morning and evening kīrtanas had already made the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple popular in Haight-Ashbury, but when the devotees began serving a daily free lunch, the temple became an integral part of the community. Prabhupāda told his disciples simply to cook and distribute prasādam—that would be their only activity during the day. In the morning they would cook, and at noon they would feed everyone who came—sometimes 150 to 200 hippies from the streets of Haight-Ashbury.

Before the morning kīrtana, the girls would put oatmeal on the stove, and by breakfast there would be a roomful of hippies, most of whom had been up all night. The cereal and fruit was for some the first solid food in days.

But the main program was the lunch. Mālatī would go out and shop, getting donations whenever possible, for whole-wheat flour, garbanzo flour, split peas, rice, and whatever vegetables were cheap or free: potatoes, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, beets. Then every day the cooks would prepare spiced mashed potatoes, buttered capātīs, split-pea dāl, and a vegetable dish—for two hundred people. The lunch program was possible because many merchants were willing to donate to the recognized cause of feeding hippies.

Harṣarāṇī: The lunch program attracted a lot of the Hippie Hill crowd, who obviously wanted food. They were really hungry. And there were other people who would come also, people who were working with the temple but weren't initiated. The record player would be playing the Swamiji's record. It was a nice, family atmosphere.

Haridāsa: It was taken outside too, outside the front. But the main food was served inside. It was amazing. The people would just all huddle together, and we would really line them wall to wall. A lot of them would simply eat and leave. Other stores along Haight-Ashbury were selling everything from beads to rock records, but our store was different, because we weren't selling anything—we were giving it away.

And we were welcoming everybody. We were providing a kind of refugee from the tumult and madness of the scene. So it was in that sense a hospital, and I think a lot of people were helped and maybe even saved. I don't mean only their souls—I mean their minds and bodies were saved, because of what was going on in the streets that they just simply couldn't handle. I'm talking about overdoses of drugs, people who were plain lost and needed comforting and who sort of wandered or staggered into the temple.

Some of them stayed and became devotees, and some just took prasādam and left. Daily we had unusual incidents, and Swamiji witnessed it and took part in it. The lunch program was his idea.

Mukunda: The Salvation Army came in one day for lunch. They just unloaded a whole truckload of people on us—about thirty or forty.

Larry Shippen: Some of the community of loose people cynically took advantage of the free food. They didn't appreciate the Swami, because they said he was, in his own way, an orthodox minister and they were much more interested in being unorthodox. It was a fairly cynical thing.

Those who were more interested and had questions—the spiritual seekers—would visit Swamiji in his room. Many of them would come in complete anxiety over the war in Vietnam or whatever was going on—trouble with the law, bad experiences on drugs, a falling out with school or family.

There was much public concern about the huge influx of youth into San Francisco, a situation that was creating an almost uncontrollable social problem. Police and social welfare workers were worried about health problems and poor living conditions, especially in Haight-Ashbury. Some middle-class people feared a complete hippie takeover. The local authorities welcomed the service offered by Swami Bhaktivedanta's temple, and when civic leaders in Haight-Ashbury talked of forming a council to deal with the crisis, they requested Swami Bhaktivedanta to take part. He agreed, but lost interest after the first meeting. No one seemed seriously interested in hearing his solution.

Master Subramuniya: A lot of responsible citizens in San Francisco were very happy that Swami Bhaktivedanta was working amongst the young people. The young people at that time were searching and needed somebody of a very high caliber who would take an interest in them and who would say, "You should do this, and you should not do that." The consensus was that no one could tell the young people what to do, because they were completely out of hand with drugs and so forth. But Swamiji told them what to do, and they did it. And everyone was appreciative, especially the young people.

Harṣarāṇī: Just from a medical standpoint, doctors didn't know what to do with people on LSD. The police and the free clinics in the area couldn't handle the overload of people taking LSD. The police saw Swamiji as a certain refugee.

Michael Bowen: Bhaktivedanta had an amazing ability through devotion to get people off drugs, especially speed, heroin, burnt-out LSD cases—all of that.

Haridāsa: The police used to come with their paddy wagons through the park in the early hours of the morning and pick up runaway teenagers sleeping in the park. The police would round them up and try to send them back home. The hippies needed all the help they could get, and they knew it. And the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple was certainly a kind of spiritual haven. Kids sensed it. They were running, living on the streets, no place where they could go, where they could rest, where people weren't going to hurt them. A lot of kids would literally fall into the temple. I think it saved a lot of lives; there might have been a lot more casualties if it hadn't been for Hare Kṛṣṇa. It was like opening a temple in a battlefield. It was the hardest place to do it, but it was the place where it was most needed. Although the Swami had no precedents for dealing with any of this, he applied the chanting with miraculous results. The chanting was wonderful. It worked.

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew that only Kṛṣṇa consciousness could help. Others had their remedies, but Prabhupāda considered them mere patchwork. He knew that ignorantly identifying the self with the body was the real cause of suffering. How could someone help himself, what to speak of others, if he didn't know who he was, if he didn't know that the body was only a covering of the real self, the spirit soul, which could be happy only in his original nature as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa?

Understanding that Lord Kṛṣṇa considered anyone who approached Him a virtuous person and that even a little devotional service would never be lost and could save a person at the time of death, Śrīla Prabhupāda had opened his door to everyone, even the most abject runaway. But for a lost soul to fully receive the balm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he would first have to stay awhile and chant, inquire, listen, and follow.

As Allen Ginsberg had advised five thousand hippies at the Avalon, the early-morning kīrtana at the temple provided a vital community service for those who were coming down from LSD and wanted "to stabilize their consciousness on reentry." Allen himself sometimes dropped by in the morning with acquaintances with whom he had stayed up all night.

Allen Ginsberg: At six-thirty in the morning we went over to Swami Bhaktivedanta's space station for some chanting and a little Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There were about thirty or forty people there, all chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to this new tune they've made up, just for mornings. One kid got a little freaked out by the scene at first, but then he relaxed, and afterwards he told me, "You know, at first I thought: What is this? But then suddenly I realized I was just not grooving with where I was. I wasn't being where I was."

On occasion, the "reentries" would come flying in out of control for crash landings in the middle of the night. One morning at two A.M. the boys sleeping in the storefront were awakened by a pounding at the door, screaming, and police lights. When they opened the door, a young hippie with wild red hair and beard plunged in, crying, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa! Oh, help me! Oh, don't let them get me. Oh, for God's sake, help!"

A policeman stuck his head in the door and smiled. "We decided to bring him by here," he said, "because we thought maybe you guys could help him."

"I'm not comfortable in this body!" the boy screamed as the policeman shut the door. The boy began chanting furiously and turned white, sweating profusely in terror. Swamiji's boys spent the rest of the early morning consoling him and chanting with him until the Swami came down for kīrtana and class.

The devotees often sent distressed young people to Swamiji with their problems. And they allowed almost anyone to see Swamiji and take up his valuable time. While walking around San Francisco, Ravindra-svarūpa once met a man who claimed to have seen people from Mars in his tent when he had been stationed in Vietnam. The man, who had just been discharged from an army hospital, said that the Martians had talked to him. Ravindra-svarūpa told him about Swamiji's book *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, which verified the idea of life on other planets, and he suggested that the Swami could probably tell him more about the people from Mars. So the man visited the Swami up in his apartment. "Yes," Swamiji answered, "there are Martians."

Gradually, Prabhupāda's followers became more considerate of their spiritual master and began protecting him from persons they thought might be undesirable. One such undesirable was Rabbit, perhaps the dirtiest hippie in Haight-Ashbury. Rabbit's hair was always disheveled, dirty, and even filled with lice. His clothes were ragged and filthy, and his dirt-caked body stank. He wanted to meet Prabhupāda, but the devotees refused, not wanting to defile Prabhupāda's room with Rabbit's nasty, stinking presence. One night after the lecture, however, Rabbit waited outside the temple door. As Prabhupāda approached, Rabbit asked, "May I come up and see you?" Prabhupāda agreed.

As for challengers, almost every night someone would come to argue with Prabhupāda. One man came regularly with prepared arguments from a philosophy book, from which he would read aloud.

Prabhupāda would defeat him, and the man would go home, prepare another argument, and come back again with his book. One night, after the man had presented his challenge, Prabhupāda simply looked at him without bothering to reply. Prabhupāda's neglect was another defeat for the man, who got up and left.

Israel, like Rabbit, was another well-known Haight-Ashbury character. He had a long ponytail and often played the trumpet during kīrtana. After one of Prabhupāda's evening lectures, Israel challenged, "This chanting may be nice, but what will it do for the world? What will it do for humanity?"

Prabhupāda replied, "Are you not in the world? If you like it, why will others not like it? So you chant loudly."

A mustached man standing at the back of the room asked, "Are you Allen Ginsberg's guru?" Many of the devotees knew that the question was loaded and that to answer either yes or no would be difficult.

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "I am nobody's guru. I am everybody's servant." To the devotees, the whole exchange became transcendental due to Swamiji's reply. Swamiji had not simply given a clever response; he had answered out of a deep, natural humility.

One morning a couple attended the lecture, a woman carrying a child and a man wearing a backpack. During the question-and-answer period the man asked, "What about my mind?" Prabhupāda gave him philosophical replies, but the man kept repeating, "What about my mind? What about my mind?"

With a pleading, compassionate look, Prabhupāda said, "I have no other medicine. Please chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa. I have no other explanation. I have no other answer."

But the man kept talking about his mind. Finally, one of the women devotees interrupted and said, "Just do what he says. Just try it." And Prabhupāda picked up his karatālas and began kīrtana.

One evening a boy burst into a lecture exclaiming that a riot was gathering on Haight Street. The Swami should come immediately, address the crowd, and calm everyone down. Mukunda explained that it wasn't necessary for Swamiji to go; others could help. The boy just stared at Prabhupāda as if giving an ultimatum: unless Swamiji came immediately, there would be a riot, and Swamiji would be to blame. Prabhupāda spoke as if preparing to do what the boy wanted: "Yes, I am prepared." But nobody went, and there was no riot.

Usually during the kīrtana at least one dancer would carry on in a narcissistic, egoistic way, occasionally becoming lewd to the point where Prabhupāda would ask the person to stop. One evening, before Śrīla Prabhupāda had come down from his apartment, a girl in a miniskirt began writhing and gyrating in the temple during kīrtana. When one of the devotees went upstairs and told Prabhupāda, he replied, "That's all right. Let her use her energy for Kṛṣṇa. I'm coming soon, and I will see for myself." When Prabhupāda arrived and started another kīrtana, the girl, who was very skinny, again began to wriggle and gyrate. Prabhupāda opened his eyes and saw her; he

frowned and glanced at some of his disciples, indicating his displeasure. Taking the girl aside, one of the women escorted her out. A few minutes later the girl returned, wearing slacks and dancing in a more reserved style.

Prabhupāda was sitting on his dais, lecturing to a full house, when a fat girl who had been sitting on the window seat suddenly stood up and began hollering at him. "Are you just going to sit there?" she yelled. "What are you going to do now? Come on! Aren't you going to say something? What are you going to do? Who are you?" Her action was so sudden and her speech so violent that no one in the temple responded. Unangered, Prabhupāda sat very quietly. He appeared hurt. Only the devotees sitting closest to him heard him say softly, as if to himself, "It is the darkest of darkness."

Another night while Prabhupāda was lecturing, a boy came up and sat on the dais beside him. The boy faced out toward the audience and interrupted Prabhupāda: "I would like to say something now."

Prabhupāda politely said, "Wait until after the class. Then we have questions."

The boy waited for a few minutes, still sitting on the dais, and Prabhupāda continued to lecture. But again the boy interrupted: "I got something to say. I want to say what I have to say now." The devotees in the audience looked up, astonished, thinking that Swamiji would handle the matter and not wanting to cause a disturbance. None of them did anything; they simply sat while the boy began talking incoherently.

Then Prabhupāda picked up his karatālas: "All right, let us have kīrtana." The boy sat in the same place throughout the kīrtana, looking crazily, sometimes menacingly, at Prabhupāda. After half an hour the kīrtana stopped.

Prabhupāda cut an apple into small pieces, as was his custom. He then placed the paring knife and a piece of apple in his right hand and held his hand out to the boy. The boy looked at Prabhupāda, then down at the apple and knife. The room became silent. Prabhupāda sat motionless, smiling slightly at the boy. After a long, tense moment, the boy reached out. A sigh rose from the audience as the boy chose the piece of apple from Prabhupāda's open hand.

Haridāsa: I used to watch how Swamiji would handle things. It wasn't easy. To me, that was a real test of his powers and understanding—how to handle these people, not to alienate or antagonize or stir them up to create more trouble. He would turn their energy so that before they knew it they were calm, like when you pat a baby and it stops crying. Swamiji had a way of doing that with words, with the intonation of his voice, with his patience to let them carry on for a certain period of time, let them work it out, act it out even. I guess he realized that the devotees just couldn't say, "Listen, when you come to the temple you can't behave this way." It was a delicate situation there.

Often someone would say, "I am God." They would get an insight or hallucination from their drugs. They would try to steal the spotlight. They wanted to be heard, and you could feel an anger against the Swami from people like that. Sometimes they would speak inspired and poetic for a while, but they couldn't sustain it, and their speech would become gibberish. And the Swami was

not one to simply pacify people. He wasn't going to coddle them. He would say, "What do you mean? If you are God, then you have to be all-knowing. You have to have the attributes of God. Are you omniscient and omnipotent?" He would then name all the characteristics that one would have to have to be an avatāra, to be God. He would rationally prove the person wrong. He had superior knowledge, and he would rationally explain to them, "If you are God, can you do this? Do you have this power?"

Sometimes people would take it as a challenge and would try to have a verbal battle with the Swami. The audience's attention would then swing to the disturbing individual, the person who was grabbing the spotlight. Sometimes it was very difficult. I used to sit there and wonder, "How is he going to handle this guy? This one is really a problem." But Swamiji was hard to defeat. Even if he couldn't convince the person, he convinced the other people in the crowd so that the energy of the room would change and would tend to quiet the person. Swamiji would win the audience by showing them that this person didn't know what he was talking about. And the person would feel the vibrations of the room change, that the audience was no longer listening or believing his spiel, and so the person would shut up.

So Swamiji would remove the audience rather than the person. He would do it without crushing the person. He would do it by superior intelligence, but also with a lot of compassion. When I saw him do these things, then I realized he was a great teacher and a great human being. He had the sensitivity not to injure a person physically or emotionally, so that when the person sat down and shut up, he wouldn't be doing it in defeat or anger—he wouldn't be hurt. He would just be outwitted by the Swami.

Even while translating in the privacy of his room, Śrīla Prabhupāda was interrupted by disturbances. Once police cars and ambulances—sirens screaming, lights flashing—converged beneath his window after the Hell's Angels had started a fight in the Diggers' store, in the next building.

On another occasion, about one-thirty A.M., while Prabhupāda was dictating Teachings of Lord Caitanya, a girl repeatedly knocked and called at Prabhupāda's door. At first he ignored the interruption. Since his arrival in San Francisco, he had completed many pages for this important book. Lord Caitanya's discussions with Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rāmānanda Rāya, and others explored many Kṛṣṇa conscious topics mentioned only briefly in Bhagavad-gītā. In the West almost no one knew about these teachings of Lord Caitanya, and now Śrīla Prabhupāda intended to compile these teachings in one volume, providing the most complete presentation of bhakti-yoga ever introduced in English. Such a book would give great substance to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But now his solitary concentration was being interrupted by a knocking at his door and a woman's voice calling.

Getting up from his desk, Prabhupāda went to the front room but did not open the door: "Who is there?"

A young woman answered, "I want to speak to you."

"Come back later in the morning," Prabhupāda told her.

He knew that in San Francisco, just as in New York, he would not always be able to write peacefully. Preaching in America meant having to tolerate just this—a crazy call in the middle of the night, tearing one away from ecstatic concentration on the pastimes of Lord Caitanya. The lost souls of Haight-Ashbury—with their illusions of knowledge, their cries for help, their arrogant challenges—pulled his attention away from his mission of translating and commenting on the scriptures. Now, alone in his apartment, speaking through the locked door, Prabhupāda told his intruder that he had work to do and that she should go away. He promised he would see her later that day.

He was ready to speak with the hippies all day, but the early morning hours were the special time for his literary work. Preaching face to face to the conditioned souls was important; he had come here to preach. But he had picked these early hours to speak intimately to the whole world through his books—without disturbance.

The girl, however, continued pounding and calling, until Prabhupāda finally opened the door. There, standing in the hallway, he saw a teenage hippie with a glassy stare and deranged appearance. He asked her what she wanted. She remained tensely silent. “Speak,” he told her. She stepped into his room. He saw her helpless—a victim in the ocean of *māyā*—and he asked her repeatedly what she wanted. Finally, the girl stared at him with widened eyes and exclaimed, “Looook! Maha ula!”

Prabhupāda decided to awaken Mukunda, who lived down the hall. He stepped barefoot into the hallway. The girl followed, shutting the selflocking door behind her. Now he was locked out of his apartment. She continued to stare at him defiantly, in the bare, unfriendly surroundings of a corridor of locked doors at one in the morning.

This was why the *bābājīs* of *Vṛndāvana* stayed in their little cottages chanting the holy name: to avoid being bothered by ungodly people. (The *bābājīs*, of course, never even dreamed of these bizarre intrusions from the psychedelic San Francisco night.)

At Mukunda's door Prabhupāda began pounding and calling loudly, “Mukunda! Mukunda!” Mukunda awoke and opened the door, astonished to see his spiritual master standing barefoot in the hallway, a wild-eyed young girl standing a few feet behind. Yet Prabhupāda remained grave and aloof. “This girl came to my door,” he began. He explained briefly what had happened and what should now be done. He did not appear angry or harassed by the girl, and he indicated that Mukunda should deal kindly with her.

Mukunda remembered when Prabhupāda had been driven out of his New York Bowery loft by his roommate David Allen, who had gone mad on LSD. Then also, Prabhupāda had remained coolheaded though caught by a dangerous and awkward circumstance. Mukunda went downstairs and awoke Hayagrīva, who had a key to Prabhupāda's apartment. Śrīla Prabhupāda then returned to his room and to his dictation of Teachings of Lord Caitanya.

Mukunda saw the girl down to the street and admonished her not to bother an elderly gentleman like the Swami at such an hour. Staring at Mukunda, she said, "You're not ready," and walked away.

At seven o'clock, when Prabhupāda came down to the temple for the morning class, the girl was sitting in the audience in a calmer state of mind. She apologized. Later in the day, Prabhupāda repeated the story in good humor, recounting how he had several times asked the girl to speak. He opened his eyes wide, imitating her expression, and said, "Look! Maha ula!" and laughed.

* * *

"We shall go for a walk at six-thirty," Śrīla Prabhupāda said one morning. "You can drive me to the park."

Several devotees accompanied him to Golden Gate Park's Stowe Lake. They knew the park well and led Śrīla Prabhupāda on a scenic walk around the lake, over a bridge, through forest-enclosed paths, and across a small rivulet, hoping to please him with nature's beauty.

As he walked, striding quickly, he would point to a tree or stop to examine a flower. "What is this tree?" he would ask. "What is this flower?" although his disciples were usually at a loss to answer. "When Caitanya Mahāprabhu passed through the forest of Vṛndāvana," he said, "all the plants, trees, and creepers were delighted to see Him and rejoiced in His presence. The plant life there is like that in the spiritual sky—fully conscious."

"And these trees, Swamiji—how conscious are they?"

"Oh, the spirit soul is there," Prabhupāda said, "but the consciousness has been arrested temporarily. Perception is more limited."

Whatever Prabhupāda saw he saw through the eyes of scripture, and his comments on the most ordinary things were full of transcendental instruction. As he walked, he reflected aloud, "Those who want to see God must first have the qualifications to see God. They must be purified. Just like the cloud is now covering the sun. They say, 'Oh, the sun is not out,' but the sun is there. Only our eyes are covered."

Like tour guides the boys led Prabhupāda to the more picturesque areas. They came upon swans gliding on the lake. "Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam," Prabhupāda said, "compares devotees to swans, and literature about Lord Kṛṣṇa to beautiful, clear lakes." The nondevotees, he said, were like crows attracted by the rubbish of mundane topics. Walking over a gravel path, he stopped and drew their attention: "Look at the pebbles. As many pebbles there are, there are that many universes. And in each universe there are innumerable living entities."

The devotees delighted in bringing Swamiji to a rhododendron glen, its big bushes completely covered with white and pink flowers. And they felt privileged to see Kṛṣṇa through Swamiji's eyes.

The next morning, when Prabhupāda again wanted to go to the park, more devotees accompanied him; they had heard from the others how Swamiji had displayed a different mood while walking. Again the boys were ready to lead him along new trails around the lake; but without announcing a change in plans, he walked up and down the macadam road beside the lake.

Prabhupāda and his followers came upon a flock of sleeping ducks. Awakened by the sound of people walking on the path, the ducks began quacking, moving their wings, and walking away. When a few devotees hurried ahead to shoo the ducks from Prabhupāda's path, the ducks began making sounds of grouching and grumbling. "Move, you ducks," one devotee said. "You're disturbing Swamiji." Prabhupāda said quietly, "As we are thinking they are disturbing us, they are thinking we are disturbing them."

Prabhupāda stopped beneath a large tree and pointed to some bird droppings on the ground. "What does this mean?" he asked, turning to a new boy who stood beside him. Prabhupāda's face was serious. The boy blushed. "I... uh... I don't know what it means." Prabhupāda remained thoughtful, waiting for an explanation. The devotees gathered around him. Looking intently down at the bird droppings, the boy thought the Swami might be expecting him to decipher some hidden meaning in the pattern of the droppings, the way people read the future in tea leaves. He felt he should say something: "It's the... uh... excreta, the defecations of... uh... birds." Prabhupāda smiled and turned toward the others for an answer. They were silent.

"It means," said Prabhupāda, "that these birds [he pronounced the word "bards"] have lived in the same tree for more than two weeks." He laughed. "Even the birds are attached to their apartments."

As they passed the shuffleboard courts and the old men playing checkers, Prabhupāda stopped and turned to the boys. "Just see," he said. "Old people in this country do not know what to do. So they play like children, wasting their last days, which should be meant for developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Their children are grown and gone away, so this is a natural time for spiritual cultivation. But no. They get some cat or dog, and instead of serving God, they serve dog. It is most unfortunate. But they will not listen. Their ways are set. Therefore we are speaking to the youth, who are searching."

When Prabhupāda and the boys passed a sloping green lawn just off Kezar Drive, the boys pointed out that this was the famous Hippie Hill. In the early morning the gently sloping hill and the big quiet meadow surrounded by eucalyptuses and oaks were silent and still. But in a few hours hundreds of hippies would gather here to lounge on the grass, meet friends, and get high. Prabhupāda advised the boys to come here and hold kīrtanas.

SPL 23: The Price Affair

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Price Affair

Swamiji's disciples in New York were surprised to find that they could still carry on in his absence. At first, rising early, going to the storefront, and holding the morning kīrtana and class had been

difficult. Without Swamiji everything had seemed empty. But he had taught them what to do, and gradually they realized that they should simply follow what he had shown them, or even imitate, as a child imitates his parents.

And it worked. At first they had been too shy to speak or lead the kīrtana, so they had played tapes of Swamiji's kīrtanas and classes. But when the evenings came and guests attended the temple, the devotees felt compelled to give "live" classes. Rāya Rāma, Brahmānanda, Satsvarūpa, and Rūpānuga took turns giving brief talks and even answering challenging questions from the same Lower East Side audiences that Śrīla Prabhupāda had lion-tamed for six months. Things were shaky and lacking without him, and yet in a sense he was still present. And the devotees found that everything—the chanting, the cooking, the taking of prasādam, the preaching—could still go on.

On January 19, just three days after his arrival in San Francisco, Prabhupāda had written back to his New York disciples. They were his spiritual children and were very dear to him. Although far from his homeland, India, he hadn't thought first of writing to anyone there. Since he was a sannyāsī, he had no interest in writing to any family members or relatives. And as for writing to his Godbrothers, there was not much importance in that, since they had repeatedly shown their reluctance to help. But being in a new city among new faces and having met with an initial fanfare of success, Prabhupāda had wanted to share the news with those most eager to hear from him. He had also wanted to reassure his disciples whom, after only a few months of training, he was expecting to conduct the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in New York.

My dear Brahmananda

Hayagriva

Kirtanananda

Satsvarupa

Gargamuni

Acyutananda

Jadurani

Please accept my greetings and blessings of Guru Gouranga Giridhari Gandharvika. You have already got the news of our safe arrival and good reception by the devotees here. Mr. Allen Ginsberg and about fifty or sixty others received us on the air port and when I arrived in my apartment there were some press reporters also who took note of my mission. Two three papers like the Examiner and the Chronicles etc have already published the report. One of the reports is sent herewith please find. I wish that 1,000 copies of this report may be offset printed at once and 100 copies of the same may be sent here as soon as possible.

I understand that you are feeling my absence. Krishna will give you strength. Physical presence is immaterial; presence of the transcendental sound received from the spiritual master should be the

guidance of life. That will make our spiritual life successful. If you feel very strongly about my absence you may place my pictures on my sitting places and this will be source of inspiration for you.

I am very much anxious to hear about the final decision of the house. I wish to open the house by the 1st of March 1967 and arrangement may be done dexterously in this connection. I have not as yet received the tapes for Dictaphone and I have sent you tapes yesterday. Please offer my blessings to Śrīmān Neal.

Śrīmān Rayarama is cooking well and distributing Prasadam to the devotees numbering sometimes seventy. It is very encouraging. I think this center will be very nice branch without delay. Everything is prospective. Hope you are well and awaiting your early reply.

The letter had helped—especially the second paragraph. Brahmānanda had posted it in the storefront. Now Swamiji had clearly enunciated that they were still with him and he was still in New York with them. It was something special—service to the spiritual master in separation—and even the devotees in San Francisco, who were with Swamiji every day, could not yet know its special taste. While the devotees in New York performed their daily duties, they often quoted from the letter and thought about it: “Krishna will give you strength. Physical presence is immaterial; presence of the transcendental sound received from the spiritual master should be the guidance of life. That will make our spiritual life successful.”

Although Prabhupāda had written that they could place his photograph on his seat, no one had a photograph. They had to ask the devotees in San Francisco for one. A boy took some poor color snapshots and sent them to New York, and the devotees placed one at Prabhupāda's sitting place in his apartment. It helped.

For Prabhupāda also, the letter to his disciples in New York marked a milestone. This was the basis on which he hoped to conduct a world movement. He could travel from place to place and yet be simultaneously present in many places by his instructions.

Brahmānanda, as president of the New York temple, frequently phoned San Francisco. “The chanting is the focal point,” he told Hayagrīva. “We can always sit and chant. We're beginning to understand what Swamiji meant when he said that worship in separation is more relishable.”

And Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to his New York disciples regularly, at least once a week. Brahmānanda got most of the business instructions: arrange to purchase a new building in New York, see Mr. Kallman and get copies of the kīrtana record, get a copy of the movie a filmmaker had made of the devotees, investigate the possibility of publishing Bhagavad-gītā. “If I am assisted by one expert type-writer...,” Prabhupāda wrote Brahmānanda, “we can publish every three months a book. And the more we have books the more we become respectable.”

Satsvarūpa got a letter from Prabhupāda asking him to type the dictated tapes of the new book, Teachings of Lord Caitanya. Although Prabhupāda's typist, Neal, had gone to San Francisco, after a day he had disappeared.

"I think you have five tapes with you because I have got only three with me," Prabhupāda wrote. "See that the tapes do not miss." Satsvarūpa had written inquiring how he would be able to understand transcendental knowledge. "You are a sincere devotee of the Lord," Prabhupāda replied, "and certainly He will bless you with auspicious advancement in the matter of spiritual understanding."

Rāya Rāma got a letter encouraging him to continue publishing the magazine. "Back to Godhead will always remain the backbone of the society... your ambition should always be how to improve the quality..."

Acyutānanda, one of the youngest devotees (only eighteen), was now working alone in the kitchen. In a letter Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to five devotees, signing his name five times, he told Acyutānanda, "Since Kirtanananda is absent certainly you are feeling some strain. But the more you serve Krishna the more you become stronger. I hope you are being properly assisted by your other Godbrothers."

Prabhupāda advised Gargamuni, also eighteen, to cooperate with his older Godbrothers. Asking whether Gargamuni had gone to see his mother, Prabhupāda said he hoped she was all right. Since Gargamuni was the temple treasurer, Śrīla Prabhupāda advised him, "Checks should be drawn with full deliberation."

Prabhupāda wrote Jadurāṇī, "I always remember you as the nicest girl because you are so devoutly engaged in the service of Krishna." She had informed him that she had been cheated by a boyfriend, and Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Better you accept Krishna as your Husband, and He will never be unfaithful... Devote yourself therefore 24 hours in the service of Krishna and see how you feel happy in all respects."

Rūpānuga had written Prabhupāda that the temperature in New York had dropped below zero and that there had been a two-day blizzard. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote,

Certainly this situation would have been a little troublesome for me because I am an old man. I think Krishna wanted to protect me by shifting me here at San Francisco. Here the climate is certainly like India and I am feeling comfortable but uncomfortable also because at New York I felt at Home on account of so many beloved students like you. As you are feeling my absence so I am feeling for you. But we are all happy on account of Krishna Consciousness either here or there. May Krishna join us always in His transcendental service.

The neophyte disciples in New York felt assurance from their spiritual master's words and by their own experience. Service in separation was a transcendental fact. They were improving in chanting on their beads, and the New York center was going on. "So long our kīrtana is all right," Prabhupāda wrote, "there is no difficulty at all."

But there was one difficulty. Attempts to purchase a new building, which had gone on smoothly while Prabhupāda had been present, had become a great problem as soon as he had left. Shortly after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure for San Francisco, Brahmānanda had given Mr. Price a thousand

dollars, and Mr. Price had promised to help the devotees get their building. When Prabhupāda heard this, he became perturbed.

In the opinion of the devotees and the trustees here, \$1000.00 has been risked without any understanding. I know that you are doing your best but still there has been an error of judgment. I am not at all displeased with you but they say that Mr. Price will never be able to secure financial help from any other source. He is simply taking time under different pretext, changing constantly. Therefore you should not pay even a farthing more than what you have paid. If he wants any more money you should flatly refuse.

Śrīla Prabhupāda remembered Mr. Price and their first meeting, at which the blond-haired, elegantly dressed businessman, his face tanned even in winter, had addressed him as "Your Excellency." That address alone had made Prabhupāda distrust him. There was a Bengali saying, Too much devotion denotes a thief. Prabhupāda knew that businessmen were prone to cheat and that an American businessman would be particularly difficult to deal with. Prabhupāda's American disciples were innocent children in worldly affairs. He was ready to instruct them step by step, but now, without consulting him, they had become involved in an unbusinesslike transaction, risking a thousand dollars of the Society's money without any written agreement.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had visited the building on Stuyvesant Street, and he wanted it. It was a historical, well-kept, aristocratic building, suitable for his New York headquarters. It was worth the \$100,000 price—if they could afford it. But it was difficult for Prabhupāda to know from San Francisco what was going on between Brahmānanda and the businessmen.

And the difficulty increased as letters and phone calls from Brahmānanda introduced other persons involved. Aside from Mr. Price there was Mr. Tyler, the owner, and Mr. Tyler's lawyer, who seemed independent of Mr. Tyler, and finally there was ISKCON's lawyer, who also had a mind of his own.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples usually surrendered to his direction, they seemed bent on listening to the businessmen's promises, even though their spiritual master had cautioned them not to. Prabhupāda became disturbed. His preaching in San Francisco was being threatened by fears that the businessmen would cheat his Society of what he had begun in New York.

With no responsible advisors to turn to, Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes discussed the problem with Mukunda and other devotees in his room. They all agreed that the transaction seemed highly irregular; Brahmānanda was probably being led on by false promises.

Brahmānanda, however, saw Mr. Price as a rare person—a successful man who wanted to help the devotees. Although no other respectable businessman had ever shown interest, Mr. Price listened and sympathized. And he would greet the devotees with "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" Brahmānanda was well aware of the humble economic and social position of the devotees. They were almost all ex-hippies, and they were poor. But here was Mr. Price, a wealthy man with diamond cuff links who was always glad to see him, shake his hand, pat his back, and speak appreciatively of the religion of India and the moral behavior of the small band of devotees.

Mr. Price had received a group of devotees as guests in his apartment and said nice things about each one of them. He had said that Hayagrīva was an excellent writer, and that Back to Godhead was the best magazine on the market, and that its mimeographed appearance made it look even better than the slicks. He said he would give the devotees a movie projector. And he came close to saying that if he could liquidate some of his money he would give them the building.

Brahmānanda, who saw Mr. Price a few times a week, would come away intoxicated with high hopes. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement could rise to success through this wealthy man's patronage. After leaving Mr. Price's office, Brahmānanda would rejoin the devotees in the evening and tell them all that had happened. On nights when there were no public kīrtanas, the devotees would hold meetings—Swamiji had named them iṣṭa-goṣṭhīs—to discuss the instructions of the spiritual master. And the iṣṭa-goṣṭhīs became dominated by talks of Mr. Price and the building.

One night Brahmānanda explained why he had given Mr. Price a thousand dollars: Mr. Price had asked for “something to work with.” It was like earnest money, and it was also for a trip Mr. Price had to take to Pittsburgh to see whether he could release some of his wealth to use in Kṛṣṇa's service.

One of the boys asked whether there would be any receipt or written agreement. Swamiji had taught them to use receipts, at least amongst themselves. Gargamuni and Satsvarūpa, as treasurer and secretary, signed each voucher, and Gargamuni kept the vouchers on file. These included requests for items like “fifty cents for a hat” and “three dollars for sneakers.” Brahmānanda said he had mentioned a written statement to Mr. Price but hadn't pressed the matter. Anyway, it wasn't necessary, or even desirable, since they were not simply conducting business with Mr. Price but cultivating a relationship. Mr. Price was a well-wisher, a friend, who was helping them as charity. He was going to do big things and use his influence to get the building. This one thousand dollars was just a gesture to show their interest and to show Mr. Price's friends the devotees weren't joking; they had some money.

In fact, the devotees had ten thousand dollars—five thousand in small donations and a five-thousand-dollar donation from a wealthy hippie. In addition to donations, the temple had a regular monthly income of eight hundred dollars—Brahmānanda's four-hundred-dollar paycheck from his job as a substitute teacher for the New York City public school system and the four-hundred-dollar paycheck Satsvarūpa earned as a caseworker for the welfare department.

But the devotees were in no position to buy any building, and they knew it—all the more reason, Brahmānanda explained at iṣṭa goṣṭhī, why they had to depend on Mr. Price. After all, he reasoned, Swamiji himself had inspired them to look for a \$100,000 building. Swamiji knew they couldn't pay for such a building, except in some extraordinary way. And Mr. Price, Brahmānanda figured, must be the way. Swamiji wanted the building. No sooner had he reached San Francisco than he had written back, “I am very anxious to hear about the final decision of the house. I wish to open the house by the 1st of March 1967 and arrangement may be done dexterously in this connection.”

The assembled devotees listened to Brahmānanda's explanations, sympathized, and added their own understanding of how Kṛṣṇa and Swamiji were working. There were a few contrary remarks and opinions, but basically everyone agreed: Brahmānanda's dealings with Mr. Price were all right.

When Kīrtanānanda and Rāya Rāma returned to New York from San Francisco, they consulted with Brahmānanda. Then Brahmānanda went to Mr. Price, who promised that if somehow they couldn't get the building he would return at least \$750. (The balance of the money represented travel in the devotees' interest.) But they would get the building, Mr. Price assured him.

Then Mr. Price told Brahmānanda the latest: he had found a wealthy financier, Mr. Hall, who had almost agreed to pay the full \$100,000 for the building. Mr. Price was working on Mr. Hall, who happened to be his close friend. Prospects seemed good. But the devotees would also have to do their part, Mr. Price explained, by putting up five thousand dollars. Mr. Price would then arrange everything else.

Mr. Price set up a meeting with an architect on Park Avenue, and soon Brahmānanda and Satsvarūpa were sitting with Mr. Price and his architect friend, reviewing sketches. To give the building that authentic Indian-temple look, the architect proposed a facade with arches and, if they liked, domes. It was wonderful! Of course, they didn't dare ask him how much it would cost. But Mr. Price even hinted that the work might be done free. After Mr. Price served himself and his architect friend some liquor and offered some to the boys (although he knew they wouldn't accept it), the two men held up tinkling glasses, smiled, and politely toasted themselves and the boys, saying, "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

While going down on the elevator, Mr. Price spoke eloquently of the devotees' faith in God. He said that others might argue about the existence of God but the most convincing thing was the devotees' personal experience. "Your personal testimony," Mr. Price assured them, "is the best argument. It is a very powerful thing."

The boys nodded. Later among themselves they laughed about the liquor, but still they figured these men wanted to help.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda heard about the latest developments, he did not share his disciples' optimism. On February 3 he wrote Gargamuni:

I had a talk with your brother Brahmananda yesterday on the dial. I am glad that Mr. Price has promised to return the amount of \$750.00 in case no sale contract is made. But in any case, you should not pay any farthing more than what you have already paid, either to the Lawyer or to Mr. Price, unless there is actual sale contract made. It appears to me very gloomy about the transaction because there was no basic understanding before the payment of \$1000.00 either to the Lawyer or to the Real estate. This is not businesslike. Unless there is a basic understanding where is the way of transaction? If there was no basic understanding, why so much waste of time and energy? I cannot understand. And if there was basic understanding, why is it changed so quickly? I am therefore perturbed in the mind. When there was no basic understanding, what was the need for appointing Lawyer? Anyway, it is my advice that you should consult me before issuing any further money. But I hope you will make the transaction successful without further delay.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had also instructed Gargamuni to protect the ten thousand dollars in the bank and never withdraw any sum that would leave a balance of less than six thousand. Prabhupāda had

left one account for which the devotees were the signers, but he also had an account for which he controlled the funds. He now asked the devotees to put six thousand dollars from their account into his. He wrote Brahmānanda, "This \$6000.00 will be transferred forthwith by me as soon as there is a Sale contract for purchase of the house."

On February 10 Prabhupāda wrote to Kīrtanānanda,

Regarding the house, I was correct in my remarks that there was no definite understanding... In such negotiations, everything is done in black and white. Nothing is being done in black and white but everything is being done with faith on Mr. Price.

Let this understanding be completed within the 1st of March 1967 and close the chapter. I think this is my last word in this connection. You are all grown up boys and you use your discretion and you can now complete the transaction without prolonging it indefinitely. If, however, we are not able to purchase a house it does not mean closing our activity at 26 Second avenue. So there is no question of packing up and coming to S.F.

Then on February 15 Prabhupāda wrote Satsvarūpa,

So far I can see from the correspondence of Brahmananda it is not possible for us to get the house for so many reasons. The main reason is that we have no money to pay cash and nobody is going to invest cash in that house because it is neither complete nor has any income. It is simply utopian to think of possessing the house and Mr. Price is simply giving us false hope.

You are all innocent boys without any experience of the world. The cunning world can befool you at any time. So please be careful of the world in Krishna consciousness. When Krishna will desire, the house will come to us automatically.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's doubts were confirmed when Mr. Price wrote to him asking for money. If Mr. Price had so much money, Prabhupāda reasoned, why was Mr. Price asking him for money?

On February 17 Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Mr. Price to impress upon him that there would have to be a sale contract before ISKCON could actually purchase the building.

If there is sale contract, my students here and in New York will be able to raise the fund very seriously. In the absence of any sale contract everything appears to be in the air and Mr. Tyler or his lawyer can change his word as he has already done.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's message was clear. Brahmānanda, however, complained of poor communications. Things were always changing, and Brahmānanda wasn't always able to get Swamiji's confirmation on the latest changes. Swamiji would write his instructions in a letter, and although the devotees had to obey whatever he said, the circumstances would often have changed by the time they received the letter. Swamiji would also sometimes change his opinion when he heard new information. Sometimes Brahmānanda would call San Francisco and Swamiji wouldn't be available. Brahmānanda didn't feel right about sending messages through the devotees in San Francisco, because he knew that the devotees there were skeptical about the whole transaction. If

New York got the building, San Francisco would have to donate a thousand dollars. And the devotees in San Francisco, of course, had their own plans for how to spend money for Kṛṣṇa.

Mr. Price suggested to the devotees in New York that maybe the Swami didn't understand American business dealings. With all respect, His Excellency couldn't be expected to know all the intricacies of finance in a foreign country. And His Excellency's request for a purchase contract was, as Mr. Price put it, "something that went out with hoop skirts." Brahmānanda and Satsvarūpa didn't know how to reply; the remarks seemed like blasphemy. But Brahmānanda and Satsvarūpa were already entangled in the promises Mr. Price had given and went on meeting with him. They would meet with Mr. Price and then ride back to Second Avenue on the subway, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote almost daily to various devotees in New York. On February 18, he wrote a letter to Brahmānanda with the word CONFIDENTIAL typed at the top of the page.

Now if you think he is able to secure money for us, if you think that there is something hopeful by this time then you can continue the negotiation as he is doing. But do not for Krishna's sake advance a farthing more on any plea by him. He may be trying his best, but he is not capable to do this. That is my honest opinion.

While trying to avoid further losses in New York, Prabhupāda continued his active preaching in San Francisco. Mukunda and the others were lining up lots of engagements, and the reception was often enthusiastic. In the same confidential letter to Brahmānanda in which Prabhupāda put forward his strategies for negotiating with Mr. Price and company, he also wrote glowingly of "grand successful" meetings at various Bay Area colleges. The meetings were similar, he said, to the wonderful kīrtanas in Tompkins Square Park. This was the way to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, not by becoming entangled with treacherous real estate agents.

I am enclosing herewith a copy of the letter received from Himalayan Academy. See how they are appreciating our method of peace movement. So in this way we have to forward our cause. No businessman will come forward to help us on utopian schemes as contemplated by Mr. Price. We have to try for ourselves. So the summary is to obtain a hire purchase sale contract from Mr. Tyler and popularize our movement by outdoor engagements as many as possible.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had done what he could. The boys were foolish, even to the point of not listening to him. But they had raised the money themselves. If despite his instructions they lost it, what further help could he give? So he simply went on with his San Francisco preaching and advised the boys in New York also to become convinced of achieving success through kīrtana.

SPL 24: New Jagannātha Purī

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

New Jagannātha Purī

Śrīla Prabhupāda put on a sweater over his turtleneck jersey, wrapped his cādar around his shoulders, and left his apartment, accompanied by a few disciples. The weather was beautiful, and

the blue, cloudless sky reminded him of India. An hour before, he had sent devotees ahead to start a kīrtana, and now one of the girls had come running back to him, excitedly knocking on his door and announcing, "Swamiji, there are so many people!"

The clay mṛdaṅgas he had ordered many months ago from Calcutta had recently arrived. Today would be one of the first times he would play a genuine clay mṛdaṅga in America. The boys and girls would like it. He had arranged for the drums to be wrapped in cloth and had cautioned the boys to be careful because the clay drums broke easily.

The walk to the park was short, and as usual Prabhupāda walked faster than his young followers. They walked down Frederick Street to Stanyan, where they turned the corner at the doughnut shop (frequented by the Hell's Angels and still sometimes visited by certain devotees). On Stanyan they hurried past the parking lot of Kezar stadium, the stadium itself looming beyond. At the Wallen Street intersection Prabhupāda continued his rapid stride without stopping or even bothering to look at the light. One of the boys caught his arm: "Wait, Swamiji—the light." But Prabhupāda darted across the street.

As they continued down Stanyan toward Haight Street, the park appeared on the right. They entered, walking past a duck pond with a fountain and a willow tree on its center island. They walked past tall redwoods and eucalyptus trees, which lent fragrance to the surrounding area. There were also maple, oak, and ash trees and flowering shrubs, like azaleas. Prabhupāda said that the park resembled parks in Bombay and that the city was like a holy place because it was named after St. Francis.

They entered a fifty-foot-long tunnel with artificial stalactites hanging from the ceiling and came out onto a path heavily shaded by trees on either side. Just ahead was the meadow, covered with tiny daisies and clover and encircled by redwood and eucalyptus trees. Prabhupāda could hear the chanting, the karatālas, and the booming of the timpani. As he entered the meadow, he saw a sloping hill dotted with hundreds of young people—sitting, lying, lounging, smoking, throwing Frisbees, or walking around; and in the meadow below the hill was his kīrtana.

The meadow was a popular place. People walked through it on the way to the zoo or the tennis courts. But today many passersby had stopped and were listening in a group, about two hundred feet from the kīrtana. Closer in, about fifty feet from the kīrtana, was another group, listening more intently. And then there was the kīrtana party itself, Prabhupāda's disciples and dozens of young hippies, sitting tightly together and chanting. And others were standing nearby, clapping and swaying to the rhythm of the drum and karatālas.

Flags decorated the kīrtana area. Three feet by four feet, they had been made by devotees, and each bore the symbol of a different religion. A bright red flag with a yellow star and the crescent moon of Islam flew from a ten-foot bamboo pole stuck into the earth. Beside it waved a pale blue flag with a dark blue Star of David in the center. And beside that, a yellow flag bore the Sanskrit omkāra.

Prabhupāda's disciples, with their long hair and casual clothes, were indistinguishable from the other young dancers and singers except for the strands of large red chanting beads around their necks. Some of the devotees danced, with arms upraised against the background of an interrupted

blue sky. Others played instruments. The karatālas and timpani were there, Hayagrīva had brought his cornet, and there were other instruments brought by devotees and hippies. Little children were taking part. Even a stray dog pranced in the innermost circle of the kīrtana party. On Sundays the meadow beneath Hippie Hill was always an open show, and today the kīrtana was the featured attraction.

Prabhupāda joined the kīrtana. Walking up suddenly, to the surprise and delight of the devotees, he sat down and began playing the mṛdaṅga and leading the singing in a loud voice.

Mukunda: Although we had heard Swamiji play different drums before and some of us had played along with him, when he played the clay mṛdaṅga from India it was a completely different feeling. The feeling it created was akin to seeing an old friend after many, many years. It was so right and so natural. It was the very thing our kīrtanas had been missing, and it increased our feelings of ecstasy many times over. Obviously Swamiji was in greater ecstasy than ever. You could sense by the way he held the drum, by the ease with which he brought out its intricate rhythms to control the kīrtana, that this drum was like a long-lost friend to him. Swamiji playing that drum was the talk of the community. Now we knew what kīrtana really was, how it was supposed to sound, what it was really like.

Prabhupāda was the center of attraction. Even his age and dress made him prominent. Whereas the others in the park were mostly young people dressed in denims or various hippie costumes, Prabhupāda was seventy and distinctly dressed in saffron robes. And the way the devotees had all cheered and bowed before him and were now looking at him so lovingly caused onlookers to regard him with curiosity and respect. As soon as he had sat down, some young children had gathered in close to him. He had smiled at them, deftly playing the mṛdaṅga, enthralling and entertaining them with his playing.

Govinda dāsi: With Swamiji's arrival there was a mastery and an authority about the whole kīrtana that was absent before. We were no longer kids in San Francisco chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Now we had historical depth and meaning. Now the kīrtana had credentials. His presence established the ancient historical quality of the chanting. When Swamiji came, the whole disciplic succession came.

After an hour of chanting, Prabhupāda stopped the kīrtana and addressed the crowd: "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This is the sound vibration, and it is to be understood that the sound vibration is transcendental. And because it is transcendental vibration, therefore it appeals to everyone, even without understanding the language of the sound. This is the beauty. Even children respond to it..."

After speaking five minutes, Prabhupāda began the kīrtana again. One woman with long, uncombed red hair began dancing back and forth and chanting, her baby in her arms. A man and woman sitting side by side played together on the heads of a pair of bongos. Subala, in tight corduroy pants and a flowing white shirt, danced in a semblance of the step Swamiji had shown him, although Subala looked somewhat like an American Indian dancer. A little girl no more than four years old sat cross-legged, playing karatālas and chanting seriously. A suave-looking fellow wearing a vest and round sunglasses played castanets against his palm. Ravindra-svarūpa sat rocking back and forth as he played the drone on the harmonium. Beside him, Hayagrīva chanted

forcefully, his head and upper body lunging forward and back, his long hair and beard jutting out wildly, while nearby a girl stood with her right arm around one boy and her left arm around another, all three of them swaying back and forth, singing with peaceful, blissful smiles, enjoying the chanting and the sunshine. One girl sat silently meditating, while beside her a girl danced provocatively and a five-year-old beside the dancing girl played with two balloons.

Prabhupāda set his mṛdaṅga aside and stood, playing karatālas and swaying among the dancers, his feet moving in a stately measure. A big black man danced nearby, facing his white girl friend, both of them moving as if they were at the Avalon. The girl shook her body and head in wild abandon, and her long straight hair completely covered her face. Bright, blonde Nandarāṇī stood on Prabhupāda's right, playing karatālas. Sometimes Prabhupāda stopped singing and simply observed the scene, his mouth closed in a stern yet sublimely tolerant expression.

Some of the young people joined hands, forming a circle, and began to dance around and around in front of Swamiji. Then they encircled him, and as he looked on, still swaying and now clapping solemnly, they danced around him hand in hand, jumping and wriggling and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. The soft pink hue of his khādī robes contrasting with the pied dress of the hippies, Swamiji looked unusual and wonderful, watching and solemnly sanctioning the kīrtana performance.

The dancing was free-form and sensuous. But that was the way these young people expressed their feelings—through their bodies. They bounced and bounded into the air. Sometimes the circle of dancers would break and become a single line, weaving in and out among the people sitting on the grass, in and out among the silk flags. A muscular boy held the hand of a girl wearing long dark braids and a black headband in American Indian style. At the end of the line, a boy held a girl's hand with his left hand while with his right he held a wooden recorder to his mouth and tooted as he weaved in and out of the crowd.

Prabhupāda became tired and sat beside the brass-bottomed timpani. Singing and playing karatālas, he sat grave and straight like an ancient sage. Nearby, a blonde woman sat in yogic posture, bending her body forward until her forehead touched the ground again and again, in supplication or exhibition. Another girl stretched out her hands imploringly in a mixed expression of inner feelings—physical and spiritual—while her golden earrings jangled. A Mexican in a checkered shirt beat a tomtom. A white sheep dog wandered from person to person.

Swamiji looked kind and amused. The hippies found him beautiful. He remained gentlemanly, aloof amid the twisting, shaking, rocking, dancing young people. Amid their most sensual movements, he appeared not at all like them, for he moved in a stately, elderly way.

As he surveyed the activities in the meadow, he seemed deeply pleased to see the ring of dancers singing all around him, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Although the enthusiasm of these hippies was often wild and sensual, the gathering assumed a wholesome sweetness due to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. For Swamiji the main thing was that the chanting was going on and on. Dressed in his saffron cloth that seemed to change colors subtly in the fading afternoon sunlight, he watched in a kindly, fatherly way, not imposing any restraint but simply inviting everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Twenty-five-year-old Linda Katz was walking in the park when she heard the sound of the kīrtana. In the crowd of hundreds of people gathered around the scene, Linda found it easy to go close without becoming conspicuous. She felt comfortable watching and even thought of joining the fun. Then she noticed the Swami leading the singing. She was startled, even a little frightened, having never before seen anyone so grave. He was striking.

And the dancers appeared beautiful to her. A girl with arms upraised and eyes closed seemed to be swinging like a tree in the wind. One of the men was tall and attractive, with golden, curly hair. And Linda saw a boy she knew from college in New York, a crazy boy who always wore a shocking-pink wool cap.

Linda had arrived in San Francisco from New York only a few days ago. She had no plans, except to study under a certain dance teacher and maybe get into some of the exciting things she had heard were going on in Haight-Ashbury. As a graduate student in ancient Greek literature at Columbia University, Linda had become attracted to Socrates, who had lived and died for truth. But she hadn't found any of her professors to be at all like Socrates. She had envisioned herself living a life of truth by pursuing scholarship, but it had become dry. The ancient civilization of Greece was a dead idea, not a living truth. It didn't touch the heart.

She had been aching for a new, exciting experience, and she was ready to throw herself into San Francisco's hippie society. She had come here alone, giving up her fashionable clothes and donning bell-bottoms and old shirts. But because she wanted to be serious, she felt awkward trying to fit in with the hippies. She felt that to belong she was supposed to wipe the serious look off her face and just smile mindlessly. So even in the society of San Francisco's hippies, she remained unsatisfied and lost.

The kīrtana in the park was the most beautiful sight Linda had ever seen. The dancers were swaying back and forth, their arms raised against the open sky, and in the middle of the dance was a dark, gray-haired wise person sitting and chanting. As she moved in closer, she began to sway with the devotees. Then she sat down and started chanting, wanting to find out what was going on.

After more than an hour of chanting, the elderly leader finally stopped the kīrtana, and Linda began talking to some of the devotees. Although the Swami had slipped away, some of his followers had remained, handing out flyers and invitations to the Sunday Love Feast and picking up the timpani and the flags. One of them asked her to come with them to the temple.

Linda found the devotees to be something like hippies, but not scruffy street people like most of the hippies she had met. They were attractive, not repellent. Madrases and plants decorated their little storefront temple. When she stopped before a painting of people singing and dancing, one of the devotees said, "This is Lord Caitanya and His associates." A devotee gave her some prasādam, and Linda left that night without meeting the Swami.

The next day, however, at seven in the morning, she returned, eager for another chance to see him. She thought he had noticed her at the park and might remember her. She had made a drawing of him, and she wanted to show him.

That morning, as Prabhupāda chanted prayers and led kīrtana, Linda didn't take her eyes off him. And when he asked everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with him on beads, she excitedly accepted a strand from one of the devotees and tried to chant like him. Then he began reading the Sanskrit verse to begin his lecture, and Linda was captivated by the sound. If she were to continue with her graduate program in Greek, she would study Sanskrit next; so she listened with keen interest, proud that perhaps no one else in the room could understand as well as she.

Later that same morning, she met Śrīla Prabhupāda upstairs in his apartment.

Linda: In the first conversation I had with him, Swamiji summed up Greek civilization for me in a couple of sentences. He explained that Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was the source of stories like the Iliad and the Odyssey and was the source of Platonic philosophy. I was thrilled. Of course, I believed him. I knew that whatever he was speaking was the truth. There was no doubt in my mind. And he didn't discourage my love for Socrates. He told me that Socrates was actually a devotee in disguise.

Then he began telling me the story of Kṛṣṇa's the butter thief, and I said, "Oh, yes, I know that story. I saw a dance about Kṛṣṇa as the butter thief." He was very pleased, and he laughed. He said, "Oh, yes, you know?"

This encounter with Swamiji was like meeting an old friend, because I felt completely at home and protected. And I felt I had found what I was looking for. Here I could use my intelligence and ask the questions I had always wanted to ask in school.

Prabhupāda initiated Linda, giving her the name Līlāvātī. Seeing her eagerness to serve him personally, he decided to teach her to cook by having her prepare his lunch. He already had a little weekend cooking class in which he taught Jānakī, Govinda dāsī, Nandarāṇī, and others the art of cooking for Kṛṣṇa. Now he invited Līlāvātī to come. He would walk back and forth in the small room, showing the girls how to knead dough, cook capātīs, measure spices in the right palm, and cut vegetables and cook them in ghee with masālā. The foods were basic—rice, capātīs, cauliflower with potatoes—but he wanted to teach the girls precisely how to cook.

Mukunda: One day, just out of curiosity, I went in to witness Swamiji's cooking classes. So I came in and stood at the doorway to Swamiji's kitchen. The women were there learning how to cook, and Swamiji said to me, "What are you doing?"

"Oh," I said, "I just came to see my wife."

Then Swamiji said, "Are you going back to Godhead or back to wife?" Everyone was amused, and I realized I wasn't welcome, so I left.

The incident made me reflect on Swamiji's seriousness. For one thing, I learned that I should not be so attached to my wife, and secondly I learned that his relationship with the women and what he was teaching them was actually very sacred—not like the sometimes frivolous association between husband and wife. Because he spent many hours in the kitchen teaching them, they were very inspired.

Līlāvātī tended to be proud. Many of the devotees were not college graduates, and none of them were classical scholars. She sometimes typed for Swamiji, did his wash, or brought flowers to his room in the morning. And he had quickly chosen her to be his exclusive cook. After only a few days of cooking lessons, Swamiji had told her, "All right, you cook." And now he came in only occasionally to check on her. Once when he saw her rolling capātīs, he said, "Oh, you have learned very nicely."

Preparing Swamiji's meals just right—with the proper spicing, with out burning anything, and on time—was a challenge. By the time Līlāvātī finished, she would be perspiring and even crying from tension. But when she brought in his lunch he would ask her to bring an empty plate, and he would serve her portions from his own plate and invite her to eat with him. For the first few days, Līlāvātī made remarks about the wonderful tastes of the prasādam, and Swamiji would smile or raise his eyebrows. But then she noticed that he never spoke while eating but seemed to be concentrating intensely as he sat, cross-legged, bending his body over the plate of prasādam and eating with his right hand.

One day, on Ekādaśī, Līlāvātī arrived late at Swamiji's apartment, thinking there would not be much cooking on a fast day. But when she entered the kitchen she found Swamiji himself busily cooking. He was heating something white in a skillet, vigorously stirring and scraping it from the bottom of the pan. "Oh," he said, "I was just wondering, 'Where is that girl?'"

Līlāvātī was too shy to ask what Swamiji was doing, so she simply busied herself cutting vegetables. "Today is a fast day," she said, as if chiding Swamiji for cooking.

"You have to understand—" he replied, "in Kṛṣṇa consciousness a fast day means a feast day. We are offering this to Kṛṣṇa." Līlāvātī continued to keep her distance from Swamiji's whitish, sticky-looking preparation until he completed it and placed it on the windowsill to cool. "Later it will harden," he said, "and we can cut it and serve it." And with that he turned and walked out of the kitchen.

When Līlāvātī finished cooking and served Swamiji his Ekādaśī lunch, he asked her to bring him some of "that thing" on the windowsill. He took a bite, seemed pleased, and asked Līlāvātī to call Mukunda and Jānakī to taste it.

Jānakī took a bite and exclaimed, "It's wonderful! Simply wonderful! Incredible! What is this?"

Turning to Līlāvātī, Swamiji asked, "What is in this preparation?"

"I don't know, Swamiji," she said.

"You don't know?" he replied. "You were standing right by me in the kitchen, and you don't remember?" Līlāvātī's face turned red.

"Oh, Swamiji," Līlāvātī replied, "I was very busy. I just didn't see."

"Oh, you are busy without intelligence," he replied, and he laughed for a long time, until Mukunda was also laughing. Līlāvātī felt even more humiliated.

Swamiji asked Jānakī if she could tell what was in the preparation. She couldn't, except that it was sweet. He then sent Līlāvātī downstairs to get Govinda dāsī and Gaurasundara. When they entered, Swamiji told Līlāvātī, "Go get some more of that simply wonderful thing."

Again, this time in front of four devotees, Swamiji asked Līlāvātī, "So what is in this preparation?" And again she defended herself; she had been too busy to notice. And again he laughed until everyone was laughing with him. He then asked Govinda dāsī to taste the "simply wonderful" and say what was in it. Immediately she guessed: sugar, butter, and powdered milk.

"Oh," Swamiji looked at Līlāvātī, "she is an artist. She is intelligent."

To Līlāvātī the whole episode was a devastating ordeal. Only later did she understand that Swamiji had been trying to teach her humility.

* * *

It was seven A.M. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat on his dais in the temple. Beside him, on an altar, stood the recently acquired statue of Kṛṣṇa. The child Kṛṣṇa stood two feet high, with His left hand on His hip, His right hand holding a rod. Gurudāsa had found Him at an import store and had begged the manager to sell Him, and after several visits the man had agreed—for thirty-five dollars. Prabhupāda had given Him the name Kartāmi-śāyī, "the boss." This morning, as Prabhupāda and Kartāmi-śāyī looked out at the devotees in the room, only about six people were present. The night before, the temple had been crowded.

"Where are the others?" Prabhupāda asked. And then he gave the answer himself: "They are sleeping? All this sleeping is not good." He took out his karatālas and began playing the one-two-three rhythm. Mukunda took up a mṛdaṅga and played along, trying to execute the rhythms Śrīla Prabhupāda had recently taught him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had not even begun singing when the door opened and half a dozen barefoot hippies wandered in, reeking of marijuana. They glanced around, then sat down on the floor with the devotees as Prabhupāda began singing Gurv-aṣṭakam, the Vaiṣṇava prayers to the spiritual master.

Although none of his disciples knew the words, they loved to listen to Swamiji sing these morning prayers. Unhurriedly, he sang each verse, several times repeating each line, deliberately developing the mood of unadulterated service to the spiritual master.

Then one of the hippies, a boy with long, straight blonde hair and a red headband, began mumbling, fidgeting, and moaning. Someone softly asked him to be quiet. The boy paused but then moaned again. Swamiji and his followers were used to drugged hippies who stayed up all night and came to the morning program, sometimes disrupting things. Usually the visitors remained submissive. And even if they occasionally called out in a strange mood, they usually found peace in

chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and would try to blend with the energy of the devotees. But today's discordant visitor seemed agitated by the chanting, as if it were challenging him. Rather he sounded like he was challenging it.

The devotees began clapping in time with Prabhupāda's karatālas, and when Prabhupāda began singing Hare Kṛṣṇa, his half-dozen followers immediately joined him, chanting both lead and chorus. Prabhupāda looked at them gravely, encouraging the bedraggled early-morning band of youngsters, and they responded determinedly.

The guests sat in drugged contemplation, although one or two tried singing along. But the blonde boy with the red headband remained adamantly disharmonious, moaning defiantly, as if trying to throw off the effects of the chanting. Nonetheless, despite the boy's moaning, which was sometimes loud and savage, Prabhupāda kept singing, and the devotees kept chanting.

Mukunda and Hayagrīva exchanged anxious glances but tolerated the boy, unsure what else to do. Some of the devotees were disturbed and even frightened, but they had also heard Swamiji say in recent lectures that advanced devotees aren't shaken in any circumstances. Swamiji was their leader, not only in devotional prayers but also in how to respond to this intruder, so they waited and watched him for a sign.

Prabhupāda remained undisturbed. But although after twenty minutes the kīrtana was strong and determined, the blonde boy's madness was not going away. As the chanting built up momentum, he became more agitated. He screamed like a lost soul and hollered like a rock singer. He was becoming more and more troubled and angry.

When the devotees rose to their feet and began dancing, the boy began dancing too, but in his own way, crying and pounding his chest. Mukunda played louder on the drum. The sounds were discordant—a clash of individual madness and group chanting—until Prabhupāda finally brought the kīrtana to a close.

The devotees bowed their heads to the floor, and Śrīla Prabhupāda intoned the Sanskrit prayers honoring the spiritual masters, the Supreme Lord, and the sacred places. “All glories to the assembled devotees,” he said.

They responded, “Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

“All glories to the assembled devotees.”

“Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

“All glories to the assembled devotees.”

“Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

“Thank you very much,” Prabhupāda said. And then, as was his morning custom, he announced, “Chant one round.”

Everyone sat down, including the crazy hippie. The devotees put aside the drums and karatālas, reached for their large red beads, and began chanting japa in unison: "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." Fingering one bead at a time, they uttered the mantra, then proceeded to the next bead.

Surprised at this turn of events, the blonde boy commented loudly, "Far out!" As rapid chanting filled the room, the boy jumped to his feet and shouted, "Come with me!" He whirled about, faced Śrīla Prabhupāda, and howled, "I AM GOD!" Then he began screaming long, loud, berserk cries: "OWAHOOOO... WAHOOOO! AAAA!... OOOOOOOOOH!" He sobbed, growled, grumbled, stomped his feet. Like a small child, he explored every sound his voice could make. Beating his fists on his chest again and again, he cried, "I am God!" And one of the boy's friends suddenly played a few notes on a panpipe.

But Śrīla Prabhupāda kept chanting japa, and the devotees also tried to continue chanting undaunted, while at the same time keeping an eye on the madman and wondering where it would all end. Then, with a final, violent ejaculation, the boy shrieked, "I AM GOD!" and in anger and disgust strode out of the room, slamming the door behind him, yelling as he ran down the street.

The proper japa peacefully engulfed the storefront, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's voice assumed its place more clearly above the voices of all the chanting devotees. After about ten minutes of chanting, Prabhupāda recited, *sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*. "Let there be all glory to the congregational chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, which cleanses the dirt from the mirror of the mind and gives a taste of the nectar for which we are always hankering."

As Prabhupāda put on his spectacles and opened the Bhagavad-gītā (he had been speaking each morning on the Sixth Chapter), the room settled and became silent for hearing his lecture. His students, some of whom had been imbibing his instructions for more than two months, listened attentively as he spoke the eternal paramparā message. It was Kṛṣṇa's timeless message, yet Swamiji was presenting it just for them as they sat on the rug early in the morning in the small storefront, 518 Frederick Street, in Haight-Ashbury.

Prabhupāda lectured on the transmigration of the soul. Foolish people, he said, aspire for material acquisitions. They don't know that these things are finished with the death of the body. Spiritual life, however, is of the utmost importance, because it is never lost. So even if Kṛṣṇa consciousness becomes inconvenient or uncomfortable, one should never give it up.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was again stressing that the devotee is never disturbed, a point that seemed especially relevant in the wake of this morning's interruption. A devotee, Prabhupāda explained, is always tolerant.

Prabhupāda told a story about the great devotee Haridāsa Ṭhākura, a contemporary of Lord Caitanya's, who endured severe beating at the hands of a Muslim magistrate. As Prabhupāda told the story, he improvised dialogue.

"Oh," the magistrate said to Haridāsa, "you are born in such a nice family, and you are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa?"

And then Prabhupāda spoke for Haridāsa: "Sir, many Hindus also have become Muhammadan, so if some Muhammadan becomes Hindu, what is the harm?"

Prabhupāda didn't change the pitch or accent of his voice while taking different parts of the dialogue. But with a subtle storyteller's art, each voice became a distinct person.

The magistrate spoke threateningly. "Oh, you are arguing?"

Then Prabhupāda became the narrator: "So, it was decided that Haridāsa was to be punished. Give the dog a bad name and hang it."

Then Prabhupāda became Haridāsa's floggers, who despite repeatedly beating Haridāsa were unable to make him cry out in pain. Finally, exhausted, they spoke up. "Sir, the idea was that you would die, but now we see that you do not die. So now punishment is awaiting us."

Haridāsa: "What do you want?"

The floggers: "We want that you should die."

Narrator: "Then he played himself into samādhi, and the floggers brought him to the magistrate."

The magistrate: "Throw him in the water. Don't put him in the graveyard. He has become Hindu."

Śrīla Prabhupāda concluded his tale. "The others were flogging him, and he was chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. He was undisturbed. He was steady. Therefore, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that a person who is spiritually advanced—for him there is no misery, even in this world, and what to speak of the other world."

A devotee suffers no loss, Prabhupāda explained. Even if he doesn't become perfectly Kṛṣṇa conscious, or even if he falls away, his next birth also will be human.

"There was a prince." Prabhupāda began a story to illustrate his point. "His name was Satyavān. But he was to die at a certain age, his horoscope said. But one girl named Sāvitṛī—she fell in love with that boy. Now she wanted to marry. Her father told her, 'He'll die at certain age. You don't marry.' But she was bent. She married.

"In course of time, the boy died—say after four or five years—and the girl became widow. But she was so staunch lover that she won't let the dead body go away. And the Yamarāja, the... what is the English for one who takes away the body or the soul after death? So he came to take the soul away. So this chaste girl would not allow the husband's body to go away."

By Prabhupāda's voice and widening eyes, he appeared as Yamarāja, the lord of death, speaking to the widow Sāvitṛī: "It is my duty that I should take. You give it up. Otherwise, you'll be also

punished.' The girl gave up her husband but followed behind Yamarāja." Then Prabhupāda's Yamarāja, by a slight dropping of his voice, became compassionate: "My dear girl, you go home. I give you benediction that you will have a son. Don't cry for your husband.' But Sāvitṛī continued to follow Yamarāja. Yamarāja said, "Why are you following me?"

Then Prabhupāda's Sāvitṛī spoke—not in a feminine voice, but with the reasoning and heart of Sāvitṛī: "Now you are taking my husband. How can I have my son?"

Prabhupāda spoke as narrator: "Oh, then he was in dilemma. He returned her husband.

So, similarly, there is a technique. If you take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then your husband, or this human form of life, is guaranteed."

The devotees understood the gist of the story, but they weren't perfectly clear what their lives had to do with the woman in the story. Some, however, understood: if they took to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, their ill-destined lives could become auspicious.

"Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda continued, "a spiritual life is the most auspicious life." He looked around emphatically at the devotees seated before him on the floor. "Anyone who has done something nice, auspicious thing—oh, it will never be vanquished. He will never be put into difficulty. It is such a nice thing."

He ended his lecture and asked for questions. A young woman raised her hand: "You say that people foolishly worship the photograph of someone who has already gone—you gave the example of George Washington or Gandhi. But can't the photo of a spiritual teacher be very helpful to teach others to love him?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, those who are spiritually advanced—they are not different from their photograph. Just like here is the statue of Kṛṣṇa—He's not different from Kṛṣṇa. The original person Kṛṣṇa and this statue of Kṛṣṇa are the same. Just like we are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa—Kṛṣṇa and the name of Kṛṣṇa are nondifferent. Do you realize it? If we are not getting some spiritual enlightenment by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, then do you think we are simply wasting our time? No. We're not wasting our time. We're actually getting spiritual ecstasy, because there is no difference. Similarly, a spiritually perfect person and his photograph is the same, because it is in the absolute stage. Is that clear?"

Govinda dāśī raised her hand: "You said that after leaving this body a person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness goes to a higher planet?"

Prabhupāda: "No. If you make perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then after leaving this body you go directly to Kṛṣṇa. But if you are not perfect, if you have simply executed a certain percentage only, then you'll get the chance of another human body. But one who has understood what is Kṛṣṇa—how Kṛṣṇa takes His birth, how Kṛṣṇa acts—he doesn't get any more material birth. Then? Where does he go? Tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti. "He comes to Me.' That means in the supreme abode of Kṛṣṇa.

"Therefore, we should be very serious. Why should we wait for another birth, either in very pious family or rich family or in other planet? This human body can give you the highest perfection. But we have to be very serious and try for that perfection. But we are not serious. We are not very serious. Actually, human civilization means that people should be very serious to have perfection of this human body— that is perfect human civilization. That is missing at the present moment."

Śrīla Prabhupāda sat in silence for several minutes, not moving. No one in the audience made a sound. Finally he reached over for his karatālas and began loudly ringing them together and singing: govinda jaya jaya, gopāla jaya jaya. And the devotees joined him:

govinda jaya jaya

gopāla jaya jaya

rādhā-ramaṇa hari

govinda jaya jaya

It was Prabhupāda's desire to see his disciples raise their Kṛṣṇa consciousness to one hundred percent in their present lifetime. They could do it, too, because the chanting was absolutely potent. If there was something they didn't understand, he would explain it. Govinda dāsī hadn't understood; she had thought that a devotee was meant to go to a higher planet. But now she understood.

And he had told them to become more serious. He knew they sometimes went to the doughnut shop and even smoked cigarettes after kīrtanas, and he tolerated it. But he let them know that he really wanted them to be completely serious. Unless they were completely serious, they might have to go to a higher planet within the material universe; and what good was that? To rise to a Human birth took many lifetimes. Hu man life was meant for perfection, so they should be serious. "But," he had said, "we are not serious."

After the kīrtana, Śrīla Prabhupāda left the storefront and returned to his apartment. Hayagrīva, turning to Haridāsa, asked why no one had thrown the crazy boy out. "In New York," Hayagrīva said, "Brahmānanda would have removed him at the first outburst."

"You have to be careful with the hippies here," Haridāsa explained. "Tactful is the word. In this neighborhood, if someone walks around high on LSD, people automatically assume that he is due all the respect of God and should be tolerated. They come in and jump up and down and scream, but we can't lay a hand on them, because they are LSD saints. If we had touched that boy this morning, the whole neighborhood would be down on us. The Diggers next door are pretty noisy, but they unplug their jukebox during lectures, and they've been very friendly, giving us clothing and helping us decorate the temple. Sometimes the Hell's Angels go over there and raise a lot of noise, and sometimes they even come in here. If they do, best to humor them. They are always trouble."

That very morning some Hell's Angels started a fight in the Diggers' store. The devotees could hear thuds and screams through the walls as a big black beat up three Hell's Angels. The brawl ended only after a police car and an ambulance arrived.

Afterwards, about a dozen people drifted into the temple, talking about the brawl. Harṣarāṇī put out extra plates for the guests.

* * *

One day in March eighteen-year-old Wayne Gunderson was walking down the street when a piece of paper, blowing along the sidewalk, caught on his foot. He tried to kick it off without breaking his stride, but it hung on. Then he stopped and tried to kick it off. He couldn't. He reached down and picked it off and found that it was a flyer—"Stay High Forever"—advertising lectures by Swami Bhaktivedanta at 518 Frederick Street.

Like so many others, Wayne, a mild-mannered young man who worked for the post office, had come to Haight-Ashbury to take part in the revolution. He attended rock concerts and be-ins, browsed through the books and posters in the psychedelic shops, shared an apartment with his girl friend and another couple, and took drugs. But he was quiet, polite, and solitary. He didn't dress like a hippie, but wore clean, conservative, casual clothes and a whimsical, odd-looking sports cap.

The flyer about the Swami seemed a timely coincidence, because Wayne had been planning to go to India to find a guru. He decided to go see Swami Bhaktivedanta on Frederick Street.

Wayne was surprised to find only a storefront. He was startled by the picture of the Swami in the window—no smiling, bearded yogī, but a shaven-headed swami with a stern look.

Wayne went in. It was a typical Haight-Ashbury scene, with hippies sitting around. But there were also a few people with big red beads strung like garlands around their necks. And up front he saw the Swami. Wayne was impressed as Prabhupāda began chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and he found the lecture firm and authoritative. The Swami stressed, "We are not these bodies." And when he spoke of Kṛṣṇa, he described Kṛṣṇa so personally that it was like being introduced to Kṛṣṇa.

After a few meetings, Wayne got up the nerve to ask a question: "Can one practice haṭha-yoga at the same time as Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

"Oh, why do you want to spend so much time with that body?" Prabhupāda replied, and Wayne felt Prabhupāda's eyes look deep within him. "You are not that body." He said it so strongly that Wayne, who was easily hurt, felt like shrinking into the floor. "This body is not as important as the soul," Śrīla Prabhupāda explained. "So we shouldn't spend so much time with the body, exaggerating its needs." Then he smiled at Wayne. "Besides, all yogas culminate in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." And Wayne felt that smile lift him completely out of his diminished and crushed condition.

Several weeks later Wayne asked about initiation. When the devotees told him he should go up and see the Swami, Wayne went home and rehearsed his lines first. Anticipating what Prabhupāda

would say, Wayne prepared his own responses and contrived the whole conversation. Then, nervously, he approached Prabhupāda's door.

But before he could even knock, the door opened, and there was Prabhupāda looking at him—not sternly, as in his picture, but kindly, as if expecting him. “Yes,” Prabhupāda said, “come in.” The incident completely shattered Wayne's planned approach. He concluded that Swamiji could read minds. So, trying to clear his mind of bad thoughts, he entered Prabhupāda's apartment.

Prabhupāda sat in his rocking chair, and Wayne, who usually sat on the floor, sat in the only other chair in the room. Wayne immediately felt uncomfortable, as he realized that it would be more proper to sit at Prabhupāda's feet. But feeling too weakhearted to alter the situation, he kept his seat, nervously fingering his sports cap. “Swamiji,” he began, “I would like to be your disciple.”

Prabhupāda immediately agreed. He asked whether Wayne could follow the four principles, and Wayne, although not even sure what the four principles were, said he could. Prabhupāda then asked him what principle was the most difficult for him to follow. “Well,” he said, “I have difficulty with meat-eating.” A lie—he was a vegetarian. But he was too shy to say that his real problem was uncontrolled sexual desire. Prabhupāda laughed, “Oh, that's no problem. We will give you prasādam. You can be initiated next week.”

Wayne then asked if he would be able to go to India. He felt the Swami would be pleased to hear that his new follower wanted to go to his country. But Prabhupāda seemed displeased: “India? Why India?” Wayne thought... The real reason he had wanted to go to India was to find a guru.

“Well,” he said, “to learn Sanskrit.”

“I will teach you Sanskrit,” Prabhupāda replied. So there was no need to go to India. And he would be initiated by a genuine guru next week—right here in San Francisco.

Some devotees helped Wayne prepare for his initiation ceremony. Hayagrīva lent Wayne his dhotī, a piece of yellow cloth much too large for Wayne. Devotees set up a sacrificial arena in the storefront—a bed of earth, firewood, colored dyes, flowers.

During the ceremony Wayne was nervous. When Prabhupāda chanted the mantras, Wayne could not hear them exactly, so he just mimicked as best he could. And when Prabhupāda began the fire sacrifice, Wayne felt a little frightened because the initiation seemed such a serious commitment. He watched Prabhupāda gravely building the fire and saying the mantras. When Prabhupāda initiated Wayne with his new name, Upendra, Wayne didn't hear it clearly and began to worry. Then the ceremony ended, and Prabhupāda stood up and abruptly left the storefront.

Upendra: Someone reminded me that I should go upstairs and give Swamiji an offering. So I decided to give him a baby blanket and a beach towel. It wasn't that I lacked money, but these things had some sentimental value to me, so I wanted to give them to Swamiji. I went upstairs to his room, and he was sitting at the foot of his mattress. I came in and bowed down and presented him with the baby blanket and beach towel. He held them up in his fingers and looked at them both in each of his hands. He said, “These things are useless,” and he tossed them down on the

floor. I was hurt, and I had nothing to say. I just sat there. After a while, I excused myself and went back to my apartment.

The next day, I went to see Swamiji during his evening visiting time, and he had the beach towel and baby blanket out on the floor like rugs so that his guests who came to visit could have something to sit on. I felt satisfaction that he had found some use for my offerings.

Prabhupāda said that Upendra was not living up to his vows, since he was still living with his girl friend. Upendra felt guilty about breaking the principles forbidding illicit sex and intoxication, but he just couldn't follow them. He wanted to tell Swamiji but couldn't bring himself to do it. Besides, he thought, even if he confessed, how could he stop? Upendra's girl friend didn't like Kṛṣṇa consciousness, didn't want to meet Swamiji, and didn't want to come to the temple. So Prabhupāda decided that instead of marrying Upendra to her, he would save Upendra from her.

Prabhupāda decided to make Upendra a brahmacārī. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda had about twenty-five San Francisco disciples, hardly any were brahmacārīs. Practically the only solid one was Jayānanda, who was a little older than the rest. Jayānanda worked all day driving a cab, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa even while driving. And when he was off work he would be at the temple, cooking or doing any service he could find or sitting with Prabhupāda in his apartment with the other devotees. He was known for his serious japa. Sitting cross-legged, eyes squeezed tightly shut, he would hold his strand of beads up in both hands and rock forward almost to the floor and back, chanting intensely, oblivious to the outside world. He was serious. And that was the only way one could remain a brahmacārī. In New York Prabhupāda had about a dozen brahmacārīs, but a more permissive attitude among his followers in San Francisco made brahmacārī life more difficult.

In the original Vedic society of ancient India, brahmacārī life began at the age of five. Parents would send their son to live with the guru at the gurukula, where the boy would receive basic education, spiritual instruction, and strict moral discipline under the guru. Even Lord Kṛṣṇa, in His transcendental pastimes on earth, had attended a gurukula and very humbly served His spiritual master.

The basic principle of brahmacārī life was celibacy. By practicing celibacy, the brahmacārī would develop great powers of memory and sensory control. And if such a trained brahmacārī later decided to take a wife, his sex life would be regulated, not licentious. But although brahmacārī life was necessary for a healthy society, Prabhupāda had seen within his own lifetime the rapid deterioration of brahmācārya almost to nonexistence.

And in America the situation was of course much worse. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam tells of a young brāhmaṇa, Ajāmila, who fell from spiritual life because he had seen a drunken man embracing a half-naked prostitute. In America to see a half-naked prostitute in public was not uncommon. As soon as a brahmacārī walked out on the street, he would confront so many allurements. But Prabhupāda was convinced that brahmacārīs could protect themselves even in America if they regularly chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa and sincerely tried to follow the rules and regulations. Kṛṣṇa would protect them.

Prabhupāda had decided to ask Upendra to come and live with him as his personal servant. Prabhupāda's former servant, Raṇacora, had recently left his position. Although supposedly a brahmacārī, he had never been a serious brahmacārī. He had even seduced one of the young women devotees in New York. Prabhupāda had found out and had asked the girl why she had indulged in sex with Raṇacora if she wasn't planning to marry him. Prabhupāda's "Why?" had so disarmed the girl that she had been unable to answer. Prabhupāda had admonished her, "You girls should not make yourselves so cheap," and had given Raṇacora another chance.

But Raṇacora never became serious. After playing the drums during the big kīrtana at the Avalon Ballroom, Raṇacora had become fascinated with the dance hall. He would sneak out from his service, lie to Prabhupāda about his absence, and go looking for girls at the Avalon. One day he never returned. As one of the devotees reported to Prabhupāda, "He just disappeared into the strobe lights." Raṇacora did come back once—to ask Prabhupāda for money so that he could return to his home in New York.

Upendra, despite his weaknesses, was spontaneously attracted to Prabhupāda and liked to be with him whenever he could. Sometimes Upendra would go up to the apartment with one or two other devotees and just sit in front of Prabhupāda as Prabhupāda sat on the thin pillow behind his low desk. Sometimes Prabhupāda would continue reading or writing, and Upendra would sit and bask in his presence, simply watching him work. After ten minutes or so, Prabhupāda would look up and say, "All right, that is enough," and the boys would bow and leave. Upendra would also go to see Prabhupāda taking his lunch, and Prabhupāda would take some rice and vegetable from his plate, put them on a capātī, and offer them to Upendra. Although the prasādam was similar to the prasādam the devotees ate downstairs, Upendra thought that it tasted much better.

One day, when Upendra was alone with Prabhupāda in his room, Prabhupāda asked, "You are living with a young girl and people who take intoxicants?" For the second time, Upendra was convinced that Swamiji could read his mind and knew his entire life.

"Yes," Upendra admitted, "but I am not having—"

Prabhupāda interrupted: "That is not good."

"Swamiji, I am not having any sexual connections."

"Where there is a boy and where there is a girl," Prabhupāda said, "there is sex. You must come and live with me."

Upendra was delighted: "Yes, I'll come immediately."

He took a few belongings from his apartment, left everything else with his girl friend, and moved into the front room of Prabhupāda's apartment. He was now Swamiji's personal servant.

Prabhupāda requested him to keep his job at the post office. Around midnight, as soon as Upendra got off work, he would return to the apartment. (Prabhupāda always left the door unlocked for him.) Usually, soon after Upendra locked the door, crawled into his sleeping bag, and fell asleep, he

would be awakened by Prabhupāda speaking into his dictating machine, composing Teachings of Lord Caitanya. Upendra would nod off again and sleep until six.

Upendra relished this close association with his spiritual master and became always cheerful. "I just want to be Swamiji's dog," he would often tell the other devotees.

One time Upendra was reading to himself from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

The whole subject matter is so presented through the lips of Śrīla Sukadeva Goswami that any sincere audience who will lend his ears submissively to this message of the transcendental world, will at once relish the transcendental mellows distinguished from the perverted mellows of the material world. The ripen fruit is not dropped all of a sudden from the highest planet of Krishna Loka but it has come down carefully being handled by the chain of disciplic succession without any change or disturbance in the formation of the soft and ripen fruit.

"You don't have any questions?" Prabhupāda asked.

Upendra looked up from the book: "No, Swamiji, I accept everything you say." Prabhupāda began rocking strongly in his rocking chair and smiled as Upendra kept reading. Then Prabhupāda taught Upendra the proper way to hold a book while reading—with the palms of both hands "up and off the lap." This advice gave Upendra greater enthusiasm to please his spiritual master by reading his books.

Upendra was still bothered by sexual desires. He thought that maybe he should get married. But he was confused about what a Kṛṣṇa conscious marriage was supposed to be. How could you be married, he puzzled, if you don't love the girl you want to marry? And how could you love her without having sex with her? He wanted to ask Swamiji about this, but he kept it to himself, waiting for an opportunity and for the courage. Then one day he entered Prabhupāda's room as Prabhupāda paced back and forth from one end of the room, with its three large bay windows overlooking Frederick Street, to the other end, where his rocking chair sat. Now, Upendra decided, he could ask his question.

"Swamiji," he began, "may I ask a question?"

"Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, stopping his pacing.

"If a boy is separate from a girl, then how can he learn to love her?"

Prabhupāda began to walk back and forth again, chanting on his beads. After a moment he turned and said softly, "Love? Love is for Kṛṣṇa." And he walked toward the window and looked down at the street below. "You want a girl? Pick one." He pointed toward some women passing on the street. "There is no love in this material world," he said. "Love is for Kṛṣṇa."

Gradually, under Śrīla Prabhupāda's pure influence, Upendra began to feel less agitated by sexual demands. He came to understand that he was not a material body but a spiritual soul, that the

soul's eternal nature was to love Kṛṣṇa, and that for a pure devotee—for Swamiji—love was for Kṛṣṇa.

More and more, Upendra just wanted to be the servant of Swamiji. He thought of what foods to buy for him and how to make things comfortable for him. It was in this mood of wanting to serve Swamiji that Upendra visited the Psychedelic Shop one day. He had heard they had recently received some prints from India, so he went in and browsed through the prints, picked out some pictures of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and took them to Swamiji.

In Prabhupāda's room, along with other devotees, Upendra unrolled the prints one by one on Prabhupāda's desk, waiting to see Prabhupāda's response. As Upendra watched, it seemed to him that Swamiji was looking at photos of his personal friend. He was pleased with the pictures. Hayagrīva commented that the religious art of the Indian prints was a bit garish, but Prabhupāda explained that the technique didn't matter. The important thing was that the pictures were of Kṛṣṇa and were executed according to Vedic descriptions. For the devotee they were beautiful; they were nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda selected as his favorite a picture of Lord Kṛṣṇa standing and playing His flute in the moonlight, the River Yamunā flowing by. In this picture Kṛṣṇa was known as Govinda. Prabhupāda held the picture up and quoted a verse:

smerām bhaṅgī-traya-paricitām sāci-vistīrṇa-dṛṣṭim

vaṁśī-nyastādhara-kīśalayām ujjalām candrakena

govindākhyām hari-tanum itaḥ keśi-tīrthopakāṇṭhe

mā prekṣiṣṭhās tava yadi sakhe bandhu-saṅge 'sti raṅgaḥ

He then took a sheet of paper and began writing, while the devotees watched him intently, listening to the scratching of the pen on the page. Then he read aloud: “My dear friend, if you still have an inclination to enjoy material life, society, friendship, and love, then please do not see the boy named Govinda, who is standing in a three-curved way, smiling and skillfully playing on His flute, His lips brightened by the full moonshine.”

“Yamunā, you can write this nicely?” Prabhupāda knew that Yamunā was a trained calligrapher. He asked her to print the verse and display it, along with the picture, by his sitting place in the temple. He wanted to be able to look at it during kīrtanas.

Upendra thought and prayed, “If I can just fix myself steadily in serving Swamiji, who has such love for Kṛṣṇa, then I too will become transcendental.” He felt that since it was not possible for him to see Govinda the way Swamiji saw Him, he should serve Swamiji, the pure devotee of Govinda, and in that way become pure. “I just want to become Swamiji's dog,” Upendra said as he left the apartment.

In New York the boys had their orders from Prabhupāda not to give any more money to Mr. Price unless there was a purchase contract. Prabhupāda still wanted the building. He had written to Brahmānanda on March 4, "I hope when I go to New York next I shall enter the new house forthwith." And he had written Rāya Rāma on March 7, "I am very glad to learn that Brahmānanda, yourself and all others have the transcendental courage to take all risks for Krishna and this act will enhance your glory in Krishna consciousness." But he wanted them not to be cheated by false promises.

Meanwhile, Mr. Price was asking the devotees to turn over \$5,000 to his financier friend, Mr. Hall, who would then add \$20,000 and make the down payment to the owner, Mr. Tyler. Mr. Price wanted Brahmānanda to get the point across to His Excellency that negotiations had to be done in this fashion, and right away, if they seriously wanted to get the house.

Brahmānanda wrote to Prabhupāda, asking him to advise the bank to transfer \$5,000 into the account controlled by the boys, the trustees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Prabhupāda gave permission and asked that the check be signed by the president and secretary, because "Brahmananda and Satsvarupa are the main support for purchasing this house, and Kirtanananda is a supplement to this from his kitchen department." But he said that the check should be made to the seller, Mr. Tyler, not to the financier, Mr. Hall. "The money and the society is yours," Śrīla Prabhupāda acknowledged. "You can spend in any way but it is my duty to give you advice as ever well-wisher."

Then Mr. Price invited Brahmānanda to meet Mr. Hall; and he suggested that Brahmānanda come prepared with a check for \$5,000. On the way, Mr. Price explained that Mr. Hall was perhaps the biggest real estate dealer in Manhattan—a multi-multimillionaire. He owned skyscrapers. Everything he owned was big. When Brahmānanda entered Mr. Hall's office, he thought it was right out of a Hollywood movie—a conference room ten times bigger than the Second Avenue temple room. And seated at the head of the large oval table was Mr. Hall himself. The room was in semidarkness, with a few spotlights on Mr. Hall, who sat before a battery of telephones. Even as they began to discuss, Mr. Hall paused several times, picking up phones and talking to persons in various places across the country.

"Young man," Mr. Hall said to Brahmānanda, "we are helping you get the house. It is a beautiful house, a New York City landmark." Then Mr. Hall's girl friend called from a boat in the Caribbean. He talked to her for a while and then returned to Brahmānanda and Mr. Price, who sat in the shadows at his conference table.

Mr. Hall had a big contract he wanted Brahmānanda to sign. Brahmā nanda knew that Swamiji wanted a contract—and here it was. He also knew that if he signed over the \$5,000 he would have no other money and no extra income; and he knew they knew it. But Swamiji wanted the building. Swamiji himself had looked at \$100,000 buildings and had offered to buy them, even though he had very little money to back his offers up. And Brahmānanda always did whatever Swamiji said. To sign this contract, Brahmānanda concluded, was an act of faith in Swamiji and Kṛṣṇa. He didn't analytically ask "Where will the rest of the money come from?" To do so, he thought, would be like doubting Swamiji.

So here he was in this big-time financier's office. It was awesome. The millionaires were going to help. Mr. Price was at Brahmānanda's elbow. Mr. Hall was telling Brahmānanda that everything was all right: "We are going to get you this house." Now it was actually going to happen. Here was one of the biggest men in Manhattan offering to help. And whereas Brahmānanda had no money, Mr. Hall would be able to pick up the place very easily from the owner. Glancing quickly over the contract, Brahmānanda signed. It was a deal. And he gave them the check for \$5,000.

As soon as Brahmānanda and Mr. Price left Mr. Hall's office, there was a distinct change in Mr. Price. Although still acting as Brahmānanda's friend, he now said, "Gee, you know, now you have to get this money." As they walked together on the uptown streets, Mr. Price cheerfully pushed the whole thing onto Brahmānanda. That was the change: before, Mr. Price had been saying that he and Mr. Hall were going to do it, but now he said that it was all up to the devotees. Brahmānanda asked about the legal position. Mr. Price explained that only the Kṛṣṇa Society was bound. But what about the promises? What about Mr. Hall's being so rich and wanting to help them and Mr. Price's wanting to help? Mr. Price assured Brahmānanda that he and Mr. Hall did want to help. They were doing everything they could. But Brahmānanda and the other devotees should also do everything they could and come up with the \$20,000 to complete the down payment by the end of the month. And what if they couldn't? Mr. Price made it very clear: "If you don't pay the balance in a month, then you lose your deposit."

By the time Brahmānanda reached 26 Second Avenue he realized he had been cheated. He was crushed. He turned to the other devotees and told them what had happened, but they could only return, "Why did you do it?" Brahmānanda phoned Śrīla Prabhupāda in San Francisco. Now that his eyes had been opened about Mr. Price, Brahmānanda was blunt about his mistake, and he told Prabhupāda that he had given away the \$5,000.

"All of it is gone?" Śrīla Prabhupāda asked.

"Yeah," Brahmānanda replied. He heard Prabhupāda hang up the phone. Brahmānanda had been about to explain the whole thing, but Swamiji had just hung up without a word. Brahmānanda placed the receiver back on the hook. He was shaken.

The next day the trustees held a special meeting. The boys sat around in the front room of Prabhupāda's apartment trying to decide what to do. Gargamuni again called Prabhupāda, who advised them to stop the check at the bank. "Swamiji's as smart as a fox," Rāya Rāma smiled. Gargamuni phoned the bank. But it was too late; the check had already been cashed.

They consulted Mr. Goldsmith, their friendly lawyer. He said it sounded like a weak legal case. Price and Hall hadn't legally bound themselves to pay anything if the devotees failed to pay; and if the devotees couldn't pay the \$20,000 balance by the end of the month, they would lose their \$5,000 deposit. They could sue for fraud, but court fees would be costly.

Then, one by one, Brahmānanda, Satsvarūpa, Kīrtanānanda, Rāya Rāma, Gargamuni, and the others began to look at the letters from Prabhupāda and discuss how he had warned them to avoid being cheated. Their greatest blunder, they began to realize, was disobeying his instructions. He had told

them not to trust the promises of these businessmen, and he had told them that the check should be made only to the owner, not to the financier.

Within a few days, further instructions from their spiritual master came in the mail. There were admonishments, but hearing from him, even if he was chastising them, was better than the pain of his hanging up the phone without a word. "But you have not followed my instructions and now you are in trouble," he wrote to the boys.

He wrote Rāya Rāma,

You are all foolish boys. I repeatedly warned you, even at the last point, that we should not pay the check unless there was agreement between Mr. Tyler and Mr. Hall. The agreement was signed like a marriage ceremony without the presence of the bride-groom. The mistake was there, and now you are repenting.

To Satsvarūpa he wrote,

You have asked me whether the San Francisco branch will pay some money for purchasing the house. But where is your house and where is the purchase? So far it is talks of Mr. Price and company in which you innocent boys have been entrapped. I do not know how I can help you in your great blunder. I can only hope that Krishna will help you.

Unlike the boys and their lawyers, Prabhupāda thought that the legal case against the businessmen would be a strong one.

I am not a Lawyer but this is common sense affair. Mr. Hall has taken the money, and he must finance to purchase the house. If he has no money to finance then it is a cheating case clear and simple.

The culprits, he said, should be brought to criminal court; their conspiracy and fraud were obvious and could be proven.

From the telephonic conversation of Brahmananda it appears to be an organised cheating case and you have to face with courage without excusing any one of them. We are not revengeful but we cannot lose Krishna's money for nothing.

The boys had already blundered so much that Prabhupāda doubted whether they could tackle the cheaters. But he said they had to try: "Let us have the house or return back the money. In default, there is clear case of cheating. Now you can do as you like."

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote the boys' lawyer, relating the history of the case. He also wrote a letter to the financier, the owner, and Mr. Price, threatening to expose everything, including what he alone had seen: that the lawyers involved were also implicated. Brahmānanda could barely understand what was going on, but it appeared that Swamiji was going to get results. The boys were fools, certainly, but the businessmen were certainly cheaters. And Swamiji claimed that he could prove it in court.

While admonishing his blundering disciples and going fiercely after the cheaters, Śrīla Prabhupāda still remained the ultimate shelter for his foolish boys. In a letter to the six trustees of his New York branch, he shed transcendental light into their gloomy minds.

Forget the chapter. Take it for granted that Krishna has taken away this money from you for your deliberate foolishness. In future be very cautious and abide by the orders of Krishna. If you abide by the orders of Krishna, He can give you things that you may need. Be cheerful and chant Hare Krishna without any lamentation. As I have told you several times, that my Guru-maharaj used to say that this world is not a fit place for a gentleman. His version is corroborated by the following verse of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. It is said like:

Yasya asti bhagavati akincana bhakti

Sarvai gunais tatra samasate sura.

Harau abhaktasya kuto mahat guna

Manorathen asato dhavato bahi

"A person who is not in Krishna consciousness has no good qualifications. However so called gentleman one may be or academically educated he may be he is hovering over the mental plane and therefore he must commit nuisance being influenced by the external energy. A person who has however unflinching faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead has all the good qualifications of the demigods." In other words you should not keep your trust on so called gentlemen of the world however nicely dressed he may be. In the matter of discharging our mission of Krishna consciousness we have to meet so many so called gentlemen but we must be very cautious for dealing with them as we are cautious in dealing with serpents.

Now, more than ever, the boys in New York wanted Swamiji to come back. Although most of the talk in the temple was still about real estate, they were holding regular kīrtana and lecture programs, and two new boys had joined. Jadurāṇī had finished some new paintings of Lord Viṣṇu, which now hung in the temple, and she was waiting anxiously for Swamiji to come and see them. Some devotees had made a new speaker's seat in the temple for Swamiji. They knew they were fools, but they asked him please to come back. He agreed. He set April 9 as the date for his return to New York. But meanwhile he still had much to do in San Francisco.

* * *

One day Mālatī hurried into Śrīla Prabhupāda's apartment, took a small item out of her shopping bag, and placed it on Prabhupāda's desk for his inspection. "What is this, Swamiji?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda looked down and beheld a three-inch wooden doll with a flat head, a black, smiling face, and big, round eyes. The figure had stubby, forward-jutting arms, and a simple green and yellow torso with no visible feet. Śrīla Prabhupāda immediately folded his palms and bowed his head, offering the little figure respects.

"You have brought Lord Jagannātha, the Lord of the universe," he said, smiling and bright-eyed. "He is Kṛṣṇa. Thank you very much." Śrīla Prabhupāda beamed with pleasure, while Mālatī and others sat amazed at their good fortune of seeing Swamiji so pleased. Prabhupāda explained that this was Lord Jagannātha, a Deity of Kṛṣṇa worshiped all over India for thousands of years. Jagannātha, he said, is worshiped along with two other deities: His brother, Balarāma, and His sister, Subhadrā.

Excitedly, Mālatī confirmed that there were other, similar figures at Cost Plus, the import store where she had found the little Jagannātha, and Śrīla Prabhupāda said she should go back and buy them. Mālatī told her husband, Śyāmasundara, and together they hurried back and bought the two other dolls in the set.

Śrīla Prabhupāda placed the black-faced, smiling Jagannātha on the right. In the center he placed the smallest figure, Subhadrā, who had a red, smiling mouth and a rectangular black and yellow torso. The third figure, Balarāma, with a white, round head, red-rimmed eyes, and a happy red smile, had the forward-jutting arms like Jagannātha and a blue and yellow base. Prabhupāda placed Him next to Subhadrā. As Prabhupāda looked at them together on his desk, he asked if anyone knew how to carve. Śyāmasundara said he was a wood sculptor, and Prabhupāda asked him to carve three-foot-high copies of the little Jagannātha, Balarāma, and Subhadrā.

More than two thousand years ago, Śrīla Prabhupāda told them, there was a king named Indradyumna, a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Mahārāja Indradyumna wanted a statue of the Lord as He had appeared when He and His brother and sister had traveled on chariots to the holy field of Kurukṣetra during a solar eclipse. When the king requested a famous artist from the heavenly planets, Viśvakarmā, to sculpture the forms, Viśvakarmā agreed—on the condition that no one interrupt his work. The king waited for a long time, while Viśvakarmā worked behind locked doors. One day, however, the king felt he could wait no longer, and he broke in to see the work in progress. Viśvakarmā, true to his word, vanished, leaving behind the uncompleted forms of the three deities. The king was nevertheless so pleased with the wonderful forms of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, and Subhadrā that he decided to worship them as they were. He installed them in a temple and began worshiping them with great opulence.

Since that time, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued, Lord Jagannātha has been worshiped all over India, especially in the province of Orissa, where there is a great temple of Lord Jagannātha at Purī. Each year at Purī, during the gigantic Ratha-yātrā festival, millions of pilgrims from all over India come to worship Lord Jagannātha, Balarāma, and Subhadrā, as the deities ride in procession on three huge carts. Lord Caitanya, who spent the last eighteen years of His life at Jagannātha Purī, used to dance and chant in ecstasy before the Deity of Lord Jagannātha during the yearly Ratha-yātrā festival.

Seeing this appearance of Lord Jagannātha in San Francisco as the will of Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda said that they should be careful to receive and worship Lord Jagannātha properly. If Śyāmasundara could carve the forms, Prabhupāda said, he would personally install them in the temple, and the devotees could then begin worshiping the deities. San Francisco, he said, could be renamed New Jagannātha Purī. He chanted, jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me. "This is a mantra

for Lord Jagannātha," he said. "Jagannātha means 'Lord of the universe.' 'O Lord of the universe, kindly be visible unto me.' It is very auspicious that He has chosen to appear here."

Śyāmasundara bought three large blocks of hardwood, and Prabhupāda made a sketch and pointed out a number of details. Using the small statues, Śyāmasundara calculated ratios and new dimensions and began carving on the balcony of his apartment. Meanwhile, the devotees bought the rest of the tiny Jagannāthas from Cost Plus, and it became a fashion to glue a little Jagannātha to a simple necklace and wear Him around the neck. Because Lord Jagannātha was very liberal and merciful to the most fallen, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, the devotees would soon be able to worship Him in their temple. The worship of the forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the temple required very high, strict standards, which the devotees were not yet able to meet. But Lord Jagannātha was so merciful that He could be worshiped in a simple way (mostly by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa), even if the devotees weren't very much advanced.

Prabhupāda set March 26, the appearance day of Lord Caitanya, as the day for installing the deities. The devotees would have a big feast and begin worshiping Lord Jagannātha. Prabhupāda said they would have to build an altar, and he told them how to prepare it.

While Śyāmasundara hurried to finish his carving, a small splinter lodged itself in his hand, and the wound became infected. Finally Śyāmasundara got blood poisoning and became so sick that he had to go to the hospital. Lord Jagannātha was taking away the reactions to Śyāmasundara's previous sinful activities, Prabhupāda said.

On March 26, the appearance day of Lord Caitanya, Prabhupāda said that during the morning they would stay together in the temple, read about Lord Caitanya, and hold kīrtana, and in the evening they would have a ceremony for installing Lord Jagannātha. Having fasted until moonrise, they would then break fast with a prasādam feast.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the temple that morning, he saw the work the devotees had done. The new altar stood in the rear of the room, above where his dais had been, and his dais was now on the right side of the room, against the wall. From his seat he would be able to see the altar very easily. The altar was a simple redwood plank seven feet above the floor and fixed between two thick redwood pillars. A canopy covered the place where the deities would stand. Below the altar hung Haridāsa's painting of Lord Caitanya and His associates dancing during kīrtana, and behind the painting was a madras backdrop. About three feet above the floor, a shelf below the painting held candlesticks and would be used for articles to be offered to the deities.

Prabhupāda took his seat. As usual, he led kīrtana and then chanted one round of japa with the devotees. Then he had Hayagrīva read aloud from the biographical sketch of Lord Caitanya from the first volume of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. But many devotees were sleepy, despite Hayagrīva's reading loudly with force and elocution. Although Prabhupāda was listening attentively and wanted the others to sit with him and hear about Lord Caitanya, when he saw that so many were dozing he stopped the reading and held another kīrtana. Then he chanted japa with them for about fifteen minutes.

"All right," he said. "We will read again. Who will read?" Līlāvati's hand flew up urgently. "All right." He had her sit near his dais, and someone placed a microphone before her. Līlāvati's reading presented a contrast to the deep tones of Hayagrīva. But she was another scholarly voice. Her careful pronunciation of the Sanskrit words and phrases was pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he several times commented, "Oh, very nice." Līlāvati was thrilled and read on intensely, determined to keep everyone awake.

That evening, devotees and hippie guests filled the room to capacity. Prabhupāda was present, and the mood was reverential and festive. It was a special event. The just-finished deities sat on the altar, and everyone was glancing at them as they stood on their redwood shelf beneath a yellow canopy, their features illumined by spotlights. The deities wore no clothes or ornaments, but were freshly painted in bright black, red, white, green, yellow, and blue. They were smiling. Śrīla Prabhupāda was also glancing at them, looking up to their high altar.

Prabhupāda lectured about the four social and four spiritual orders of life described in the Vedic literatures. According to one's quality and work, he said, each person has a certain occupational duty. "But the ultimate goal of that duty," he explained, "is to satisfy the Supreme Lord." It doesn't matter if one is lowborn or poor. "Material qualification has nothing to do with spiritual evolution. Spiritual evolution is that with your talent, with your capacity, with your work, you have to satisfy the Supreme Lord."

Prabhupāda gave the example of Śrīdhara, an impoverished devotee of Lord Caitanya's who earned the equivalent of less than five cents a day yet offered half his earnings in worship of the Ganges. If one were rich, however, one should still give half his wealth to the service of the Lord. Prabhupāda cited Rūpa Gosvāmī, who had given fifty percent of his wealth for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, given twenty-five percent for his family, and saved twenty-five percent for emergencies. Suddenly Prabhupāda began speaking about the money his disciples in New York had lost: "And twenty-five percent for himself so that in times of emergency... because as soon as money is gone out of my hand, I have no control. We have recently lost \$6,000—not here, in our New York. So as soon as the check is out of hand, now it is gone. It is gone..."

Prabhupāda gestured to indicate money flying like a bird out of his hand. At this reference to the troubling, entangling affair with Mr. Price and the foolish boys and their hard-earned money gone, Prabhupāda paused for a moment. Then he continued with the lecture.

"Paying attention to Bhagavān, the Supreme Person, is practical," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "Here is Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa's form is there. Kṛṣṇa's color is there. Kṛṣṇa's helmet is there, Kṛṣṇa's advice is there. Kṛṣṇa's instruction is there. Kṛṣṇa's sound is there. Everything Kṛṣṇa. Everything Kṛṣṇa. There is no difficulty.

"But if you turn your attention to the impersonal and to the Supersoul in the heart, as the yogīs do, then it is very difficult. It is very difficult. You cannot fix your attention to the impersonal. In the Bhagavad-gītā it is said that, *kleśo 'dhikataras teṣām avyaktāsakta-cetasām*: "Those who are attached to the impersonal feature of the Absolute Truth—their business is very troublesome." It is not like

chanting, dancing, and eating—this is very nice. But that is very troublesome. And even if you speculate on the impersonal, the result that is achieved by working hard for many, many lives is that you will have to also eventually come to Kṛṣṇa."

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued describing Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, citing evidence from scriptures like Bhagavad-gītā and Brahma-saṁhitā. The first step in spiritual life, he explained, was to hear from Kṛṣṇa Himself. But Prabhupāda warned that if one heard the class and then went outside and forgot, he could not improve. "Whatever you are hearing, you should say to others," Prabhupāda said. And he gave the example of how disciples were writing in Back to Godhead what they had heard from their spiritual master. And to speak or write what one has heard, a person has to be thoughtful...

"You are hearing about Kṛṣṇa, and you have to think. Then you have to speak. Otherwise, it will not work. So, śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś ca dhyeyaḥ pūjyaś ca. And you should worship. Therefore, you require this Deity for worshiping. We have to think of, we have to speak, we have to hear, we have to worship (pūjyaś ca). And should we do this occasionally? No. Nityadā: regularly. Regularly. This is the process. So anyone who adopts this process—he can understand the Absolute Truth. This is the clear declaration of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Thank you very much. Any question?"

A young boy raised his hand and began earnestly: "Well, you mentioned about how we should follow the supreme law, how we should be like what your spirit tells you? Or what you, your supreme, whatever it tells you? I mean... whatever it tells you? I mean, if you meditate a lot, you feel you should do... something..."

Prabhupāda: "It is not something. It must be actual fact."

Boy: "Yeah, I mean like..."

Prabhupāda: "So, there is no question of something."

Boy: "Well, I see..."

Prabhupāda: "Something is vague. You must speak what is that something."

Boy: "Well, let's say, be... uh..."

Prabhupāda: "That you cannot express. That means you have no idea. So we have to learn. This is the process. I am speaking of the process. If you want to have knowledge of the Absolute Truth, the first thing is faith. Then you must be thoughtful. Then you must be devoted, and you must hear from authentic sources. These are the different methods. And when you come to the ultimate knowledge—from Brahman platform to Paramātmā platform, then to the Supreme Absolute Personality of Godhead—then your duty shall be to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the perfection of your active life. These are the processes. And it is concluded that everyone, never mind what he is—his duty is to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

“And how can we satisfy? We have to hear about Him, we have to speak about Him, we have to think about Him, we have to worship Him—and that is regularly. This will help you. But if you have no worship, if you have no thought, if you have no hearing, if you have no speaking, and you are simply thinking of something, something, some thing—that something something is not God.”

Boy: “I mean, well, you know, I'm so young. I didn't know what I meant. I don't know what...”

Prabhupāda: “Don't know. That I am speaking—that you have to know by these processes. We are all “don't knows.” So we have to know. This is the process.”

Young woman: “Since we don't yet understand the supreme law, because we are young and just new to this, then how can we speak about it?”

Prabhupāda: “Therefore you have to hear! The first thing is śrotavyaḥ: you have to hear. Unless you hear, how can you speak? We are therefore giving you facility to hear. You hear, and then you can speak. Then you can think. We are giving all facility to hear, to speak, to think, to worship. This is the Society's work. Unless you hear, how can you speak? The first task is given śrotavyaḥ. Then kīrtitavyaś ca dhyeyaḥ pūjyaś ca nityadā. These are the processes. You have to hear. And hearing, you have to repeat, chant. And then you have to think. You have to worship. These are the processes.

Upendra: “Swamiji... so we have to hear, I understand. But do we speak, or do we first listen for a long time and then speak?”

Prabhupāda: “No. Why a long time? Suppose you hear two lines. You repeat that two lines. And aside from everything else, you hear Hare Kṛṣṇa. So you can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. What is the difficulty there? Śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś ca. You have to hear and chant. So if you cannot remember all the topics which we are speaking from the Bhagavad-gītā or Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, you can at least remember this: Hare Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, it is the easiest process. You hear Hare Kṛṣṇa and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. The other things will come automatically.

“Now, this is possible for everyone. Even the child can repeat Hare Kṛṣṇa. What is the difficulty? You hear Hare Kṛṣṇa and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. We are not giving you very difficult or troublesome task. Then everything will follow. We are giving you everything. But if you feel in the beginning it is difficult, then you can do this—this is very nice—chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. You are doing that, actually. Hearing and chanting—this process will help you. It is the basic principle of advancement in spiritual life. Without hearing, we shall simply concoct, waste our time, and mislead people. We have to hear from the authoritative sources.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda paused. The philosophical talk had been rigorous, lasting about forty-five minutes. He wasn't tired—he could have gone on—but now he wanted to conduct the deity installation. Everything necessary for spiritual life was here: the temple, the devotees, the books, the Deity, prasādam. He wanted these young people to take advantage of it. Why should they remain living like animals and thinking of spiritual life as a vague groping for “something”? They should take advantage of Kṛṣṇa's mercy and be successful and happy. And for this, Prabhupāda was their tireless servant.

Prabhupāda: "So, Hayagrīva? Come here." Prabhupāda had had the devotees arrange for a large candle on a plate. The ceremony he had planned would be a simple one, with devotees and guests one after another coming up and offering the flame in circles before the Jagannātha deities. "This should be lighted up," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "and when there is kīrtana, one must be doing like this before the Deity. [Śrīla Prabhupāda moved his hands around in a circle before the Deity.] You see?"

Hayagrīva: "Yes, yes."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, with the kīrtana. And then when one person is tired he should hand it over to another person, devotee. When he is tired he should give to another—as long as the kīrtana will go on. This should be done with the kīrtana just now. Do you follow? Yes. You begin, and when you are tired you hand over to another. It will go on like that."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, from his seat, guided Hayagrīva in approaching the Deity with the lit candle. Some of the girls giggled with nervous expectation. "Before the Deity," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "All right. Now better begin kīrtana."

Prabhupāda began playing karatālas and singing the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra to the popular melody he had introduced in America. "Just in front," he called out, gesturing to Hayagrīva to stand more directly before the deities. Devotees and guests began rising to their feet and dancing, arms raised, bodies swaying rhythmically back and forth as they faced the bright, personal forms of the deities and chanted. Colored lights within the canopy began flashing intermittently blue, red, and yellow, highlighting the extraordinary eyes of Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Balarāma. Mukunda, who had arranged the lights, smiled and looked to Swamiji, hoping for approval. Prabhupāda nodded and continued forcefully singing Hare Kṛṣṇa.

The young hippies were enthusiastic in singing and dancing, knowing that the kīrtana usually lasted an hour. Some had grasped the Swami's words when he had spoken of fixing the mind on the personal form of the Supreme Lord; and they had understood when he had looked up at the deities and said, "Here is Kṛṣṇa." Others hadn't followed, but thought that it was just great and blissful to sing Hare Kṛṣṇa and look at the grinning, big-eyed deities up on the altar, amid the flowers and billowing incense.

Prabhupāda watched with pleasure as one person after another took a turn at offering the candle before Lord Jagannātha. This was a simple procedure for installing the Deity. Although in big temples in India the installation of the Deity was a complex, exact procedure, requiring several days of continuous rituals directed by highly paid priests, in San Francisco there were no brāhmaṇa priests to pay, and the many other standards would be impossible to maintain.

For non-Hindus to handle Lord Jagannātha and conduct His worship would be considered heresy by the caste-conscious brāhmaṇas of India. Except for Prabhupāda, none of the persons present would have been allowed even to enter the temple at Jagannātha Purī. The white man, the Westerner, was not allowed to see Lord Jagannātha except once a year as He rode in His cart during the Ratha-yātrā festival. But these restrictions were social customs, not the scriptural injunctions.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had introduced Deity worship and initiation for anyone, regardless of caste, race, or nationality. And Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's father, had longed for the day when the people of the West would mingle with their Indian brothers and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to the West to fulfill the desires and the vision of his spiritual master and of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura by creating Vaiṣṇavas among the Westerners. Now, if the Westerners were to become actual devotees, they would have to be given the Deity worship. Otherwise it would be more difficult for them to become purified. Śrīla Prabhupāda was confident in his spiritual master's direction and in the scriptures. He had faith that Lord Jagannātha was especially merciful to the fallen. He prayed that the Lord of the universe would not be offended by His reception at New Jagannātha Purī.

When the kīrtana ended, Prabhupāda asked Haridāsa to bring him the candle. Prabhupāda passed his hands across the flame and touched them to his forehead. "Yes," he said, "show everyone. Each and every one. Whatever they can contribute. Here, take it like this and show everyone." He indicated that Haridāsa should present the candle before each person in the room so that all present could touch their hands to the flame as he had shown and then touch their foreheads. As Haridāsa went from person to person, a few devotees dropped some coins on the plate, and others followed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained further: "The Bhāgavatam has recommended hearing, chanting, thinking, and worshiping. This process which we just now introduced on the advent of Jagannātha Svāmī means that now this temple is now completely fixed. So this is the worshiping process. This is called āratī. So at the end of kīrtana, this āratī will go on. And the worshiping process is to take the heat of the light and, whatever your condition is, pay something for the worship. So this simple process, if you follow, you just see how you realize the Absolute Truth.

"Another thing I request you: All the devotees—when you come to the temple, you bring one fruit and one flower. If you can bring more fruit, more flower, it is very good. If not, it is not very expensive to bring one fruit and one flower. And offer it to the Deity. So I will request you, when you come to the temple you bring this. Whatever fruit it may be. It does not mean that you have to bring very costly fruit. Any fruit. Whatever you can afford. One fruit and one flower."

He paused, looking around the room: "Yes, now you can distribute prasādam."

The guests sat in rows on the floor, and the devotees began serving prasādam, offering the first plate to Prabhupāda. The food preparations were those Prabhupāda had personally taught the devotees in his kitchen: samosās, halavā, puris, rice, several cooked vegetables, fruit chutney, sweets—all the Sunday specials. The guests loved the prasādam and ate as much as they could get. While the devotees, especially the expert women, served more and more prasādam, the guests relaxed and enjoyed an evening of feasting and convivial conversation. After Prabhupāda tasted all the preparations, he looked up with raised eyebrows: "Very nice preparations. All glories to the cooks."

A few minutes later, as the feasting continued, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke into the microphone, "Jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me. Howard, repeat this."

Hayagrīva swallowed, cleared his throat, and spoke up: “Jagannāthah svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me.”

Prabhupāda: “Yes, this should be chanted. Jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me.”

A boy asked what it meant. Hayagrīva replied, “Oh... uh, Lord of the universe, please be present before me.”

When Prabhupāda noticed an older, respectably dressed man leaving the room without receiving a feast plate, Prabhupāda became concerned: “Oh, why is he going away? Ask him to come.”

A boy ran after him, opening the temple door and calling, “Please don't leave. Swamiji requests...”

As the man reentered the storefront, Prabhupāda requested, “Please, please, take prasādam.” And turning to the servers, he instructed, “Give him first.” And so the feasting continued beneath the altar of Lord Jagannātha and under the auspices of His servant, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The next day, acting on a whim, the devotees took the Jagannātha Deity off the altar and carried Him to Golden Gate Park for a kīrtana. Within minutes, hundreds gathered in the meadow below Hippie Hill, dancing and chanting around Lord Jagannātha. After several hours, the devotees returned Him to the altar.

Prabhupāda disapproved: “The Deity should never leave the temple. The deities don't go out to see the people, except on special occasions. They are not for parks for birds to drop stool on. If you want to see the deities, you have to visit them.”

Lord Jagannātha's presence quickly beautified the temple. Devotees made garlands for Him daily. Jadurāṇī's paintings of Lord Viṣṇu arrived from New York, and Govinda dāsī had painted a large portrait of Śrīla Prabhupāda, which now hung beside his seat. Devotees also put Indian prints of Kṛṣṇa on the walls. The lights flashing upon Lord Jagannātha made His eyes seem to pulsate and His colors move and jump, and He became a special attraction in the psychedelic neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury.

As Prabhupāda had requested, devotees and guests began bringing offerings before the altar of Lord Jagannātha. Hippies would come by and leave whatever they could: a stalk of wheat, half a loaf of bread, a box of Saltines, a piece of fudge, or candles, flowers, or fruit. Hearing that before using something for yourself you should first offer it to God, some hippies began bringing their new clothes and offering them with a prayer to Lord Jagannātha before wearing them. These hippies didn't follow Lord Jagannātha's instructions, but they wanted His blessings.

Each night, the devotees performed the āratī ceremony just as Prabhupāda had taught them, taking turns offering a candle before Lord Jagannātha. When the devotees asked whether they could add anything to the ceremony, Prabhupāda said yes, they could also offer incense. He said there were many more details of Deity worship, numerous enough to keep the devotees busy twenty-four hours a day; but if he were to tell them everything at once, they would faint.

Speaking privately in his room to one of his disciples, Prabhupāda said that during kīrtana in the temple he thought of Lord Caitanya dancing before Lord Jagannātha. He told how Lord Caitanya had traveled to Purī and danced before Lord Jagannātha in such ecstasy that He had been unable to say anything more than “Jag—, Jag—.” Lord Caitanya had been thinking, “Kṛṣṇa, for so long I wanted to see You. And now I am seeing You.” When Lord Caitanya had lived in Purī, as many as five hundred men at a time would visit Him, and every evening there would be a huge kīrtana with four parties, each with four mṛdaṅga players and eight karatāla players. “One party this side, one party this side,” Prabhupāda explained. “One party back side, one party front side. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the middle. They would all dance, and the four parties would chant, “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa...” That was going on every evening so long He stayed at Jagannātha Purī.”

The devotees understood that there was a great difference between themselves and Swamiji. He had never been a hippie. He wasn't at home amid the illusion of Haight-Ashbury's LSD, psychedelic posters, rock musicians, hippie jargon, and street people. They knew he was different, though sometimes they forgot. He spent so much time with them every day—eating with them, joking with them, depending on them. But then sometimes they would remember his special identity. When they chanted with him in the temple before Lord Jagannātha, he, unlike them, would be thinking of Lord Caitanya's kīrtanas before Lord Jagannātha in Purī. When Lord Caitanya had seen Jagannātha, He had seen Kṛṣṇa, and His love for Kṛṣṇa had been so great that He had gone mad. Prabhupāda thought of these things to a degree far beyond what his disciples could understand—and yet he remained with them as their dear friend and spiritual instructor. He was their servant, teaching them to pray, like him, to be able to serve Kṛṣṇa: “O Lord of the universe, kindly be visible unto me.”

* * *

Govinda dāsī had a question for Swamiji. He had mentioned briefly that Lord Caitanya used to cry in separation from Kṛṣṇa and had once even thrown Himself into a river, crying, “Where is Kṛṣṇa?” She was unsure whether her question would be proper, but she waited for an opportunity to ask it.

One evening after the lecture, when Prabhupāda asked for questions and there were none, Govinda dāsī thought, “This is my chance.” But she hesitated. Her question wasn't on the subject of his lecture, and besides, she didn't like to ask questions in public.

“No question?” Śrīla Prabhupāda looked around. Govinda dāsī thought Swamiji seemed disappointed that there were no questions. He had said several times that they should ask questions and clear up any doubts. Again he asked, “Have you got any questions?”

Govinda dāsī: “Uh, well, could you tell about Lord Caitanya asking...”

Prabhupāda: “Hmm?”

Govinda dāsī: “... asking where is Kṛṣṇa?”

Prabhupāda: “Hmm?”

Govinda dāsī: “Could you tell about Lord Caitanya asking where is Kṛṣṇa and falling in the water? Or would that be not...”

Prabhupāda smiled. “Yes, yes. Very nice. Your question is very nice. Oh, I am very glad.

“Lord Caitanya—He was the greatest symbol of kṛṣṇa-bhakti, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. So just see from His life. He never said that, “I have seen Kṛṣṇa.’ Never said, “I have seen Kṛṣṇa.’ He was mad after Kṛṣṇa. That is the process of Caitanya philosophy. It is called viraha. Viraha means “separation’... “separation’: “Kṛṣṇa, You are so good, You are so merciful, You are so nice. But I am so rascal, I am so full of sin, that I cannot see You. I have no qualification to see You.’ So in this way, if one feels the separation of Kṛṣṇa—“Kṛṣṇa, I want to see You, but I am so disqualified that I cannot see You’—these feelings of separation will make you enriched in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Feelings of separation. Not that “Kṛṣṇa, I have seen You. Finished. All right. I have understood You. Finished. All my business finished.’ No! Perpetually. Think of yourself that “I am unfit to see Kṛṣṇa.’ That will enrich you in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

“Caitanya Mahāprabhu displayed this—these feelings of separation. This is Rādhārāṇī’s separation. When Kṛṣṇa went from Vṛndāvana to His place, His father’s place, Rādhārāṇī was feeling in that way—always mad after Kṛṣṇa. So Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, took the separation feeling of Rādhārāṇī. That is the best way of worshiping Kṛṣṇa, becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. So you know that Lord Caitanya fell on the sea: “Kṛṣṇa, if You are here. Kṛṣṇa, if You are here.’

“Similarly, the next devotees, Lord Caitanya’s direct disciples, the Gosvāmīs—Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī—they also, the same disciplic succession, they also worship Kṛṣṇa in that separation feeling. There is a nice verse about them.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda sang:

he rādhe vraja-devike ca lalite he nanda-sūno kutah

śrī-govardhana-kalpa-pādapa-tale kālindi-vanye kutah

ghoṣantav iti sarvato vraja-pure khedair mahā-vihvalau

vande rūpa-sanātanau raghu-yugau śrī-jīva-gopālakau*

“These Gosvāmīs also, later on when they were very much mature in devotional service—what were they doing? They were daily in the Vṛndāvana dhāma, just like a madman: “Kṛṣṇa, where You are?’ That is the quality.

“It is a very nice question.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda paused and uttered a thoughtful “Mmm.” He remained silent. They also remained silent, watching him. He sat cross legged on the black velvet pillow on the redwood dais. His hands were folded, his eyes closed. And he became overpowered by inner feelings of ecstasy. Although the

simple devotees present could not know what was happening, they could see him enter a deep inward state. They could feel the atmosphere transform into awesome devotional stillness. They kept their eyes fixed on him.

A minute and a half passed. Śrīla Prabhupāda uttered another thoughtful “Mmm” and opened his eyes—they were filled with tears. He reached over and grasped his karatālas, which rattled in his hand. But he moved no further. Again he withdrew from external consciousness.

Another minute of silence passed. The minute seemed extremely calm, yet intense and long. Another minute passed. After almost four minutes, Prabhupāda cleared his throat and struck the karatālas together, beginning the slow rhythm. A devotee began the one-note drone on the harmonium. Prabhupāda sang: govinda jaya jaya gopāla jaya jaya/ rādhā-ramaṇa hari govinda jaya jaya, building the chanting to a lively pace. After about ten minutes the kīrtana stopped, and Prabhupāda left the room.

As the devotees rose and began their various duties—some leaving out the front door behind Prabhupāda and going to the kitchen, others coming together for conversation—they all knew that their spiritual master had been intensely feeling separation from Kṛṣṇa. They had no doubt that it was a deep ecstasy, because just by being in his presence during that long and special stillness they also had felt a glimmer of the same love for Kṛṣṇa.

* * *

On the invitation of his disciples, Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed to hold a kīrtana on the beach. On a Tuesday night, with no kīrtana or lecture scheduled in the temple, he got into the back seat of one of the devotees' cars. About a dozen initiated followers and a couple of dogs got into other cars, and together they traveled to the beach. When they arrived, some devotees went running across the beach, gathering driftwood and building a fire in the shelter of a sand dune.

The late afternoon air was cool, and there was a seaside wind. Prabhupāda was dressed in a long checkered coat over a hooded sweatshirt. During the kīrtana he clapped and danced while the devotees joined hands, forming a circle around him. As the sun was setting, all the devotees faced the ocean, raising their arms and singing as loudly as they could, “Hariiiiii Bol!” But with the surf pounding in on the coast and with the great expanse of windy air around them, their kīrtana sounded very small.

Gathering around the fire, the devotees buried foil-wrapped potatoes and foil-wrapped apples filled with raisins and brown sugar under the coals. It was their idea, but Prabhupāda was happy to comply with their ideas of California kīrtana fun.

Haridāsa and Hayagrīva had composed a song about the sage Nārada Muni, and they sang it for Prabhupāda.

Do you know who is the first eternal spaceman of this universe?

The first to send his wild, wild vibrations

To all those cosmic superstations?

For the song he always shouts

Sends the planets flipping out.

But I'll tell you before you think me loony

That I'm talking about Narada Muni,

Singing

HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA

KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE

HARE RAMA HARE RAMA

RAMA RAMA HARE HARE

Prabhupāda laughed. He liked anything that had chanting in it. And he asked them to compose more such songs for their countrymen.

Walking together along the beach, they came upon an old, dilapidated Dutch windmill. "Mukunda," Prabhupāda said, "you should approach the government and tell them that we will restore this windmill if they let us build a temple on this site." Mukunda took it as a joke at first, but then he saw that Prabhupāda was completely serious. Mukunda said he would inquire about it.

Prabhupāda, in his oversized checkered coat buttoned up to the neck, was the beloved center of the devotees' outing. After their walk, he sat with them on a big log, eating baked potatoes smeared with melted butter; and when he finished he threw his remnants to the dogs.

As the night grew dark, stars appeared high over the ocean, and the devotees stood close around Prabhupāda for a last kīrtana. Then, just as in the temple, they bowed down, and Prabhupāda called out the prayers to the Lord and the disciplic succession. But he ended: "All glories to the assembled devotees! All glories to the assembled devotees! All glories to the Pacific Ocean!"

They all laughed. Swamiji was doing what his disciples wanted: enjoying an evening kīrtana-cookout at the beach with them. And they were doing what he wanted: chanting the mahā-mantra, becoming devotees of Kṛṣṇa, and becoming happy.

* * *

Hayagrīva sat facing Prabhupāda, alone with Prabhupāda in his room. A few days before, Hayagrīva had shown Prabhupāda a play about Lord Caitanya he had found in the library, and Prabhupāda

had said it wasn't bona fide. So Prabhupāda decided to prepare an outline for a bona fide play and have Hayagrīva write it. "I will give you the whole plot complete," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "Then all you will have to do is execute it."

Prabhupāda was in a relaxed, jolly mood, intent on relating the events of Lord Caitanya's life. He had prepared an outline of twenty-three scenes, and now he wanted to expound each one. Hayagrīva had barely enough time to understand what Prabhupāda was about to do and almost no time to prepare himself for note-taking as Prabhupāda began describing the first scene.

"First scene," he began, "is that people are passing on the road with saṅkīrtana, just as we do. There is a very nice procession with mṛdaṅga and karatālas and that bugle, and all people are doing saṅkīrtana in the ordinary way. We have to make a nice procession.

"The second scene shows Kali as decorated blackish with royal dress and very ugly features. And his queen is another ugly-featured lady. So they are disturbed. They will talk amongst themselves that, "There is the saṅkīrtana movement now, so how shall we prosecute our business in this Age of Quarrel, Kali-yuga?" In that scene there will be in one corner two or three people drinking. The scene will be like that. The Age of Quarrel personified and his consort are sitting in the center. In one corner someone is taking part in drinking, and in another part somebody is illicitly talking of lust and love with a woman. In another section there is slaughtering of a cow, and in another section, gambling. In this way, that scene should be adjusted. And in the middle, the ugly man, Kali, and the ugly woman will talk that, "We are now in danger. The saṅkīrtana movement has been started. What to do?" In this way, you have to finish that scene.

"Then the third scene is very nice—rāsa dance."

Hayagrīva interrupted. He had some of his own ideas about what he called "the dramatic point of view." "I think," Hayagrīva said, strongly articulating his words, "this can apply for the whole world, in the sense that the names may be Indian but I think the exhibition you described of the assembly of Kali and his consort Sin and the exhibition of illicit sex and the slaughterhouse can all be from Western prototypes."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he had no objection to Hayagrīva's suggestion but that he didn't want people to think he was singling out Westerners, as if they were the only ones who committed illicit sex. Hayagrīva was about to reply but decided that this was no time to quibble; Swamiji was eager to go on describing the pastimes of Lord Caitanya.

Prabhupāda: "Rāsa dance means Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī in the center and the gopīs are surrounding. You have seen that surrounding scene when they were dancing with us the other day in the park hand to hand?"

Hayagrīva: "Yes, yes."

Prabhupāda: "So one Kṛṣṇa and one gopī—they are dancing. That should be the scene. Then the rāsa dance should be stopped, and Kṛṣṇa will talk with the gopīs. Kṛṣṇa will say to the gopīs that, "My dear friends, you have come to Me in the dead of night. It is not very good, because it is the

duty of every woman to please her husband. So what your husband will think if you come in such dead of night? So please go back.'

"So in this way the gopīs will reply that, "You cannot request us to go back, because with great difficulty and with great ecstatic desire we have come to You. And it is not Your duty to ask us to go back.' In this way, you arrange some talking that Kṛṣṇa is asking them to go back but they are insisting, "No, let us continue our rāsa dance.'

"Then when the rāsa dance is finished, the gopīs will go, and then Kṛṣṇa will say, "These gopīs are My heart and soul. They are so sincere devotees they do not care for family encumbrances or any bad name. They come to Me. So how shall I repay them? He was thinking, "How shall I repay their ecstatic love?' So He thought that, "I cannot repay them unless and until I take up their situation to understand Me. But I Myself cannot understand Me. I have to take the position of the gopīs—how they are loving Me.'

"So with that consideration He took the form of Lord Caitanya. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa is blackish, and Lord Caitanya is the color of the gopīs. The whole life of Lord Caitanya is the representation of the gopīs' love toward Kṛṣṇa. That should be painted in the picture of this scene. Do you have anything to ask?"

Hayagrīva: "This is His determination to incarnate as Lord Caitanya?"

Prabhupāda: "Lord Caitanya, yes."

Hayagrīva: "In order to...?"

Prabhupāda: "In order to appreciate Kṛṣṇa in the form of a gopī. Just like I have got dealings with you. So you have got your individuality, and I have got my individuality. But if I want to study how you are so much obedient and loving to me, then I have to go to your position. It is very natural psychology. You have to paint in that way."

Prabhupāda described and explained one story after another, most of them new to Hayagrīva. Hayagrīva couldn't properly spell or even pronounce the names; he didn't know who Lord Caitanya's mother was or whether Nityānanda was a devotee. And when Prabhupāda told the story of Kṣīra-cora Gopīnātha, the Deity who stole condensed milk for His devotee, Hayagrīva got confused and thought Prabhupāda had said that Lord Caitanya had stolen the condensed milk.

Prabhupāda: "No. Oh. You did not hear? Caitanya, after seeing the Deity, He was sitting and seeing, and meantime Nityānanda Prabhu narrated the story how the Deity's name became Kṣīra-cora Gopīnātha. You do not follow me?"

Hayagrīva groped, "Nityānanda?"

Prabhupāda: "Nityānanda was going with Lord Caitanya..."

Hayagrīva: "Nityānanda was narrating this to Lord Caitanya?"

Prabhupāda: “Yes, the Deity was known as Kṣīra-cora Gopīnātha. The story”—Prabhupāda repeated for the third time—“was narrated that formerly He stole one pot of condensed milk for His devotee.”

Hayagrīva: “Now, what direct relationship does this have to Lord Caitanya?”

Prabhupāda: “Lord Caitanya visited this temple. Anyone in those days going to Jagannātha Purī from Bengal had to pass that way. And on the way, the Kṣīra-cora Gopīnātha temple is there. So everyone used to visit. Formerly, Mādhavendra Purī also visited, and for him the Deity stole the condensed milk. From that time, the Deity is known as Kṣīra-cora Gopīnātha. That story was narrated to Caitanya Mahāprabhu. So while sitting before the Deity, the story was narrated, and Caitanya Mahāprabhu relished that God is so kind that sometimes He steals for His devotee. This is the significance. So here the scene should be arranged that it is a very nice temple, the Deity is within, and Lord Caitanya has entered while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. And then He saw the worship, āraṭi. These things are to be shown in this scene. And a little story about Him, that's all.”

When Prabhupāda told of Lord Caitanya's visit to the Sākṣi-Gopāla temple, Hayagrīva again got lost. “Do you follow?” Prabhupāda asked.

“No,” Hayagrīva chuckled. “No.”

Eventually, Hayagrīva stopped asking questions and interrupting. Although he had very little knowledge of the identity or meaning of the characters, as soon as he had heard a little about them he had been trying to adjust and rearrange their activities from the “dramatic point of view.” Prabhupāda had raised no objections to Hayagrīva's inquiries. In fact, Prabhupāda had invited them, so that Hayagrīva could understand how to present the play. Hayagrīva, however, decided to first try to hear what Prabhupāda was saying.

By the end of the first hour of their talk, Prabhupāda had narrated many scenes from the first half of Lord Caitanya's life: His teasing the brāhmaṇas by the Ganges at age five, His civil disobedience movement against the Muhammadan magistrate, His accepting the renounced order at age twenty-four, His last meeting with His beloved mother, His traveling to Purī and touring South India, His meeting and instructing disciples like Sārvabhauma, Rāmānanda Rāya, and Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī.

Finally Prabhupāda's morning schedule permitted him to go no further. It was time for him to bathe and take lunch. The next day they would meet again.

At the next session Hayagrīva listened more carefully, and the transcendental scenes came quickly, one after another. As Prabhupāda described each scene, speaking the words and thoughts of Lord Caitanya and His associates, Prabhupāda seemed to be seeing the scenes enacted before him. He especially became moved when he spoke of Lord Caitanya and Haridāsa Ṭhākura.

“The life of Haridāsa Ṭhākura,” Prabhupāda said, “is that he was born in a Muhammadan family. Some way or other he became a devotee, and he was chanting three hundred thousand times: “Hare

Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.' And Caitanya Mahāprabhu made him the ācārya, the authority of chanting. Therefore, we glorify him—nāmācārya Haridāsa Ṭhākura ki jaya—because he was made the ācārya, the authority of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

“When Lord Caitanya took sannyāsa, Haridāsa Ṭhākura decided, “My dear Lord, You are leaving Navadvīpa. Then what is the use of my life? Either You take me or let me die.’

“So Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “No. Why shall you die? You come with Me.’ So He took him to Jagannātha Purī. In Jagannātha Purī, because he considered himself born of a Muhammadan family, Haridāsa did not enter the temple. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave him a place at Kāśīnātha Miśra's house. There he was chanting, and Caitanya Mahāprabhu was sending him prasādam. In that way he was passing his days. And Caitanya used to come and see him daily.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted a scene for the passing away of Haridāsa Ṭhākura.

Hayagrīva: “Is this the same Haridāsa the Muhammadans threw into the river?”

“Yes,” Prabhupāda said.

Then very casually Hayagrīva mused aloud, “So he finally met his end there in the fifth scene?”

Prabhupāda hesitated. Here again Hayagrīva revealed his lack of transcendental knowledge, talking as though Haridāsa's passing away was the same as an ordinary man's meeting his end.

“All right,” Hayagrīva cued him, “what is this particular incident?”

Prabhupāda: “The particular incident is significant. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was a brāhmaṇa, and He was a sannyāsī. According to social custom, He should not even touch a Muhammadan. But this Haridāsa Ṭhākura was a Muhammadan, and yet at his death He took the body Himself and danced. And He put him in the graveyard and distributed prasādam.

“Because Haridāsa was a Muhammadan, he did not enter the temple of Jagannātha Purī, because the Hindus were very strict. Haridāsa was a devotee, but he thought: “Why should I create some row?’ So Caitanya Mahāprabhu appreciated Haridāsa's humble behavior. Although he had become a devotee, he was not forcibly going to the temple. But then Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself was daily coming and seeing him. While going to take bath in the sea, He will first of all see Haridāsa: “Haridāsa, what you are doing?’ Haridāsa will offer his respect, and He will sit and talk for some time. Then Caitanya Mahāprabhu will go and take His bath.

“In this way, one day when He came He saw Haridāsa not feeling very well: “Haridāsa, how is your health?’

“ “Yes, sir, it is not very... after all, it is the body.’

"Then the third day He saw that Haridāsa is going to leave his body today. So Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked him, "Haridāsa, what do you desire?" Both of them could understand. Haridāsa said that, "This is my last stage. If You kindly stand before me."

Śrīla Prabhupāda became caught in the intense spiritual emotions of the scene, as if it were happening before him. He closed his eyes: "Mmm." He stopped talking. Then he began again slowly, haltingly. "So Caitanya Mahāprabhu stood before him... and he left his body." Prabhu pāda sighed and became silent. Hayagrīva sat staring at the floor. When he glanced up, he saw that Swamiji was crying.

Prabhupāda quickly summed up a few last scenes and ended his outline. "Now you write," he told Hayagrīva, "and I shall make some addition or alteration. This is the synopsis and framework. Now you can proceed." Hayagrīva left the room. The material was lengthy, and whether he would ever write the play was doubtful. But he was thankful to have received this special discourse.

* * *

Sitting on a bridge table in the student lounge, chanting into a little microphone while his followers played their instruments, Prabhupāda began the kīrtana at Stanford University. At first there were about twenty students, but gradually more entered the lounge and gathered around. Everyone was chanting. Then suddenly the lounge became transformed, as more than two hundred Stanford students, most of them completely new to the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, danced and chanted with as much enthusiasm as the most uninhibited Haight-Ashbury crowd. Prabhupāda led the kīrtana for more than an hour.

In his talk afterwards he explained what they had all just experienced: "This Hare Kṛṣṇa dance is the best process for getting out of this illusion that "I am this body." Our Society is trying to distribute to the world the priceless gift of the Lord. You did not understand the words, but you still felt the ecstasy to dance."

Prabhupāda took questions from the audience. Everything proceeded in a standard fashion until someone asked whether college students should respond to the military draft. Prabhupāda replied that since they had elected their own government, there was no use complaining if the government told them to go to war. But some of the students—the same students who had chanted and danced only minutes before—began to shout, "No! No!" Prabhupāda tried explaining his point, but they raised their voices in anger until the hall became a bedlam of shouting. Finally Śrīla Prabhupāda picked up his karatālas and began chanting again, and the dissenters left.

The next day, the Palo Alto Times ran a front-page story with headlines and a photo of the kīrtana.

Ancient trance dance features swami's visit to Stanford

Hold on there a minute, all you "with it" people. There's a new dance about to sweep the country. It's called "the swami."

It's going to replace the frug, watusi, swim and even the good old barn stomp.

Why? Because you can do any old step to it and at the same time find real happiness. You can rid yourself of the illusion that you and your body are inseparable...

The chant started quietly but gained volume as more people joined in.

After half an hour, a long-haired youth with three strings of red beads around his neck stood up and began to dance to the music. He closed his eyes in ecstasy and held his hands palms up shoulder high.

Two girls soon followed him. One had a string of bells around her neck.

A bearded fellow with a fluorescent pink skull cap joined in, still beating on his tambourine.

The Swami cut in a microphone in front of him, and the added volume provoked others to chant and stomp more loudly.

A pretty girl in a sari danced as if in a hypnotic trance.

A short dark man neatly dressed in suit and tie threw off his shoes and joined in. A young math professor did likewise. A pretty, blond, 3-year-old girl rocked and swayed in one corner.

Suddenly most of the audience was dancing and chanting. The pace grew faster and faster. Faces streamed with sweat; the temperature soared.

Then it all stopped.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased with the article and asked for some photocopies of it. "What are they calling the dance?" he laughed. "The Swami?" Across the top of the kīrtana photo he typed, "Everyone joins in complete ecstasy when Swami Bhaktivedanta chants his hypnotic Hare Kṛṣṇa."

The devotees got Prabhupāda an engagement at a YMCA, where the audience consisted almost entirely of children. The devotees had decorated the hall with posters of Kṛṣṇa and had hung a big sign with the mahā-mantra on it. The children chanted along with Prabhupāda during kīrtana. Just before the lecture, Guru dāsa reminded him, "Maybe the talk should be simple, since they are all between nine and fourteen years old." Prabhupāda nodded silently.

"Is there a student here who is intelligent?" Prabhupāda began. No one responded. After a moment a twelve-year-old boy, urged by his teachers and fellow students, raised his hand. Prabhupāda motioned for him to come forward. The boy wore thick glasses, short pants, and a blazer, and his hair was combed back very neatly. Pointing to the boy's head, Prabhupāda asked, "What is that?"

The boy almost scoffed at the simpleness of the question: "My head!"

Prabhupāda then pointed to the boy's arm and said quietly, "What is that?"

"My arm!" the boy said.

Prabhupāda then pointed to the boy's foot: "What is that?"

"My foot," the boy answered, still looking incredulous.

"Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "You say this is my head, my arm, my foot—my body. But where are you?" The boy stood perplexed, unable to answer Prabhupāda's simple question.

"We say my hand," Śrīla Prabhupāda continued, "but who is the owner of my hand? We say my hand, so that means someone owns my hand. But where does the owner live? I do not say 'I hand,' I say 'my hand.' So my hand and I are different. I am within my body, and you are within your body. But I am not my body, and you are not your body. We are different from the body. Real intelligence means to know who I am."

Haight-Ashbury's Psychedelic Shop, a popular hippie gathering place, had extended to Prabhupāda many invitations to come and speak. After the Mantra-Rock Dance the hippies there had put a sign in the window: A Night of Consciousness. Also in response to the Mantra-Rock Dance, they had opened a meditation room in the rear of their store. But since the hippies at the Psychedelic Shop were almost always intoxicated, Prabhupāda's followers had said that it wouldn't be a good idea for Prabhupāda to go. But the hippies kept entreating. Finally the devotees relented, advising Prabhupāda it might be all right for him to go.

So one Saturday night, Prabhupāda and two devotees walked over to Haight Street, to the Psychedelic Shop. Young people crowded the streets: hippies sitting along the sidewalk selling hashish pipes and other dope paraphernalia; homosexuals; wildly costumed hippies with painted faces; small groups smoking marijuana, drinking, singing, and playing guitars—a typical evening on Haight Street.

At the Psychedelic Shop, marijuana and tobacco smoke hung heavy in the air, mingling with the smell of alcohol and bodies. Prabhupāda entered the meditation room, its ceiling and walls covered with madrases, and sat down. The room was full of hippies, many lying down, heavily intoxicated, looking up at him with half-closed eyes. He spoke in a low voice, but his presence somehow held their attention. Although lethargic, the group was appreciative, and after Prabhupāda had finished, those who were still conscious expressed their approval.

* * *

On Saturday, April 1, near the end of his stay in San Francisco, Prabhupāda accepted an invitation from Lou Gottlieb, head of Morning Star Ranch, a nudist hippie commune. Morning Star was a bunch of young people living in the woods, the devotees explained to Prabhupāda. The hippies there had spiritual aspirations. They grew vegetables and worshiped the sun. They would hold hands and listen to the air. And naturally they were involved in lots of drug-taking and free sex.

When Lou came in the morning to pick up the Swami, they talked, and Prabhupāda gave him a *rasagullā* (a sweet made of bite-sized balls of curd simmered in sugar water). After a few minutes together in Prabhupāda's room, they started for Morning Star, sixty miles north of San Francisco.

Lou Gottlieb: I told Swamiji to fasten his safety belt. He said no. He said Kṛṣṇa will handle it, or something. So on the way out I was showing off all my vast erudition in having read a biography of Ramakrishna. That's when Bhaktivedanta gave the best advice to the aspirant I ever heard. We were talking about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and Aurobindo and this and that. So he said, "You know," putting a gentle hand on my knee, "when you have found your true path, all further investigation of comparative religion is merely sense enjoyment."

Situated in a forest of redwoods more than two hundred feet tall, Morning Star Ranch occupied what had once been an egg farm. Some of the land had been cleared for farming. There were a few tents, some unsubstantial little huts, a couple of tree houses, but the only decent, insulated building was Lou's place, an old chicken house. The commune had about one hundred full-time members, with the number of residents rising to as many as three hundred on the weekends in warm weather, when people would come out to work in the garden or just walk around naked and get high.

Prabhupāda arrived at one in the afternoon on a beautiful sunny day. He first wanted to rest, so Lou offered his own house. Walking to Lou's place, Prabhupāda noticed a few nude men and women hoeing in the garden. One of the workers, a short, stocky young man, Herbie Bressack, stopped his work in the garden and came to greet the Swami.

Herbie: Lou Gottlieb introduced us. We were planting potatoes at the time. He said, "This is Swami Bhaktivedanta." I came out of the garden and shook Swamiji's hand. I said, "Hello, Swami." He asked me, "What are you doing?" I told him that I was just planting potatoes. He then asked me what I was doing with my life. I didn't answer.

After resting for a few minutes, Prabhupāda was ready for the kīrtana. He and Lou went to a hilly pasture where the hippies had placed a wooden seat for Prabhupāda before a bower of wild flowers arranged like a bandshell. Prabhupāda took his seat and began chanting. The commune members, all of whom had been anticipating the Swami's visit, gathered eagerly for the group meditation.

Mike Morissey: Some people had clothes on, some people didn't. Some were dancing around. But Swamiji wasn't looking at our bodies, he was looking at our souls and giving us the mercy we needed.

The kīrtana was well received. One of the members of the commune was so enthralled by the kīrtana that he decided to put on his clothes and go back to San Francisco with the Swami. Prabhupāda spoke very briefly, and then he prepared to leave, shaking hands and exchanging courtesies as he walked to the car.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda hadn't spoken much philosophy, his kīrtana left a deep impression on the hippies at Morning Star. While leaving he had told one of the young men, "Keep chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra here." And they did.

Lou Gottlieb: The Swami was an extremely intelligent guy with a job to do. There was no sanctimony or holy pretention, none of that eyes- lifted-silently-to-the-sky. All I remember is just a very pleasant, incredibly safe feeling. There's no doubt that the mahā-mantra—once you get the mantra into the head, it's there. It never stops. It's in the cells. It awakens the DNA or something. Shortly thereafter, half of the people at Morning Star got seriously into chanting. Those that did were extremely sincere God seekers. Their aspiration was a thousand percent sincere, considering the circumstances in which they were found. They were all dopers, that's for sure, but they definitely gave that up once they got in touch with the mahā-mantra.

* * *

His top cloth wrapped loosely around his shoulders, Prabhupāda stood a last moment by the open door of the car and looked back in farewell to the devotees and the storefront temple. It was no longer a mere storefront but had become something worthy: New Jagannātha Purī. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had asked him to come here. Who among his Godbrothers could imagine how crazy these American hippies were—hallucinating on drugs, crying out, "I am God!" So many girls and boys—unhappy, mad, despite their wealth and education. But now, through Kṛṣṇa consciousness, some were finding happiness.

The first day he had arrived the reporter had asked him why he had come to Haight-Ashbury. "Because the rent is cheap," he had replied. His desire was to spread the movement of Lord Caitanya; why else would he have come to such a dilapidated little storefront to live next to a Chinese laundry and Diggers' Free Store? The reporters had asked if he were inviting the hippies and Bohemians to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Yes," he had said, "everyone." But he had known that once joining him, his followers would become something different from what they had been before.

Now the devotees were a family. If they followed his instructions they would remain strong. If they were sincere, Kṛṣṇa would help them. Lord Jagannātha was present, and the devotees would have to worship Him faithfully. They would be purified by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and following their spiritual master's instructions.

Prabhupāda got into the car, accompanied by some of his disciples, and a devotee drove him to the airport. Several carloads of devotees followed behind.

At the airport the devotees were crying. But Prabhupāda assured them he would return if they would hold a Ratha-yātrā festival. "You must arrange a procession down the main street," he told them. "Do it nicely. We must attract many people. They have such a procession yearly in Jagannātha Purī. At this time the Deity may leave the temple."

He would have to return, he knew, to tend the delicate devotional plants he had placed in their hearts. Otherwise, how could he expect these neophytes to survive in the ocean of material desires known as Haight-Ashbury? Repeatedly he promised them he would return. He asked them to cooperate among themselves—Mukunda, Śyāmasundara, Guru dāsa, Jayānanda, Subala, Gaurasundara, Hayagrīva, Haridāsa, and the girls.

Only two and a half months ago he had arrived here at this very terminal, greeted by a throng of chanting young people. Many were now his disciples, although just barely assuming their spiritual identities and vows. Yet he felt no compunctions about leaving them. He knew that some of them might fall away, but he couldn't stay with them always. His time was limited.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, the father of two small bands of neophytes, tenderly left one group and headed east, where the other group waited in a different mood, a mood of joyful reception.

SPL 25: "Our Master Has Not Finished His Work"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

"Our Master Has Not

Finished His Work"

There was no warning that Śrīla Prabhupāda's health would break down; or, if there were, no one heeded it. As he moved from his devotees in San Francisco to his devotees in New York, no one passed any words that Swamiji should slow down. After the five-and-a-half hour jet flight, Prabhupāda spoke of a "blockading" in his ears, but he seemed all right. He didn't rest, but went straight through the festive airport reception into three hours of strong lecturing and chanting in the storefront at 26 Second Avenue. To his New York disciples he appeared dazzling and lovable, and by his presence, his glances, and his words, he increased their Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To them his advanced age, now nearing seventy-two years, was but another of his transcendental features. He was their strength, and they never thought to consider his strength.

In the temple, speaking from a new dais behind a velvet-covered lectern, Prabhupāda said, "In my absence things have improved." New paintings hung on the freshly painted white walls. Otherwise, it was the same tiny storefront where he had begun his International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

He had written them that he wanted to enter the new building on his return, but they had failed. And they had foolishly lost six thousand dollars. But without dwelling on this, Prabhupāda made a more important observation: his disciples, despite the physical absence of their spiritual master, had made progress by following his instructions.

As he sat looking happily at the freshly painted walls and the bright faces of his disciples, Prabhupāda explained how one obtained expertise in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by submissively following the spiritual master. He gave the example that although an engineer's apprentice may not be expert, if he turns a screw under the direct supervision of the expert engineer he is acting as an expert. Many of the devotees were relieved to hear this. They knew that giving up material desires was difficult and that they weren't going to become completely pure devotees overnight. Brahmānanda had even written a poem stating that if, after many lifetimes, he could chant one round of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra with attention, he would consider this the greatest success. But

Prabhupāda was explaining that even if they weren't expert in love of Kṛṣṇa, if they worked under an expert they were also acting as experts.

The next morning, with the fanfare of Prabhupāda's arrival past, it became apparent just how dependent the devotees were on their spiritual leader. The attendance was down to the dozen or so regulars, and Prabhupāda silently entered the storefront and began to lead the chanting. But when the moment came for the devotees to sing in response and Prabhupāda heard their first chorus, he looked out to them, startled and compassionate. Now he could hear: they were weak—more like croaking than singing. They had deteriorated in his absence! The kīrtanas had changed while he had been away, and now he was hearing what the devotees were like: helpless souls croaking without joy or verve.

Śrīla Prabhupāda lectured from Caitanya-caritāmṛta. "When flying from San Francisco I noticed that the plane was flying above an ocean of clouds. When I came from India by boat I saw an ocean of water, and on the plane I saw an ocean of clouds extending as far as you can see. Above the clouds is the sun, but when we come down through the clouds and land, everything in New York is dim and clouded. But the sun is still shining. Those clouds cannot cover the whole world. They cannot even cover the whole United States, which is no more than a speck in the universe. From an airplane we can see skyscrapers as very tiny. Similarly, from God's position, all this material nonsense is insignificant. As a living entity, I am very insignificant, and my tendency is to come down. But the sun doesn't have the come-down tendency. It is always above the clouds of māyā...."

A new boy raised his hand: "Why is it that one person, one soul, comes to Kṛṣṇa and another doesn't?"

Prabhupāda replied with another question: "Why is one soul in the Bowery and another has come to the Kṛṣṇa temple?" He paused, but no one could reply. "Because one wants to be here and the other doesn't," he explained. "It is a question of free will. If we use it properly, we can go to Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise we will stay down in the material world."

Everyone had something to ask Swamiji. Throughout the day, devotees would be in and out of his room, asking practical and philosophical questions. And they took up their old ways of reciprocating with him. Once again Prabhupāda was telling Acyutānanda what to cook for lunch and explaining to him that an expert servant learns to anticipate what the master wants even before he asks for it.

Satsvarūpa came in to show Prabhupāda the latest typed manuscripts for Teachings of Lord Caitanya. Although there was no difference in Satsvarūpa's assignment, now that he was face to face with Prabhupāda he realized he had to type and edit more seriously. He asked whether he could resign from his job at the welfare office. Prabhupāda said no.

Jadurāṇī continued painting in the outer room of Prabhupāda's apartment. Casting shyness aside, she asked him many questions about how to paint Kṛṣṇa. "How is Lord Viṣṇu situated in the heart?" she asked. "Is He sitting, or standing, or what?"

Prabhupāda replied, "Oh, for that you have to meditate for thousands of years." Jadurāṇī stared at him in dismay. Then Prabhupāda said, "He is standing," and she went off happily to paint.

When Jadurāṇī complained of weak health, Prabhupāda asked Acyutānanda to see that she got milk twice a day. Looking through the window that opened into the outer room, where typing, painting, and sometimes even construction went on, Prabhupāda watched Jadurāṇī one day as she worked on a painting of Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana party. Just as she started to paint the words of the mahā-mantra across the bottom of the painting, Prabhupāda called through the window "Don't put the mahā-mantra there."

"But you told me to put it there," she said.

"I've changed my mind. Hare Kṛṣṇa should not be below Caitanya Mahāprabhu."

One by one, Prabhupāda saw all his old New York followers: Gargamuni, the temple treasurer, who reported good sales of the Hare Kṛṣṇa record and incense; Rāya Rāma, editor of Back to Godhead, who talked about his indigestion; and Rūpānuga, who had a good job but was having difficulty convincing his wife about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even Mr. Chutey, the landlord, dropped by with complaints about the boys' behavior.

Prabhupāda also met Michael Blumert, a newcomer. Michael had been seeing a psychiatrist as a result of devastating drug experiences. When he had begun coming to the temple, his mother and father had thought the Swami another evil force. On meeting Swamiji, however, Mrs. Blumert accepted his authenticity, although her husband remained doubtful. "Mr. Blumert," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "your wife is more intelligent." Mr. Blumert said he wanted his son to help the world in a more practical way—by becoming a doctor. Prabhupāda argued that there were already so many doctors but still people were suffering. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, however, could relieve a person's suffering completely; so the work of Kṛṣṇa consciousness was more valuable. Mr. Blumert was unconvinced, but he agreed to let Michael stay with the devotees and drop going to the psychiatrist. He came to respect the Swami, even though disagreeing with him.

With Brahmānanda, Prabhupāda discussed the urgent problem of obtaining a permanent visa. Prabhupāda had repeatedly extended his visa ever since he had entered the country in 1965. Now immigration officials denied him any further extensions. He didn't want to leave the U.S., but the only way he would be able to stay would be to get permanent residency. He had applied, but so far with no success. "Your government doesn't want me to stay," he had said, "so I may have to go back to India."

Swamiji's going back to India was a frightening prospect. His disciples had barely been able to accept that he could leave them for preaching elsewhere in the U.S. If he were to go back to India! They feared they might fall back into the material world. He was sustaining their spiritual life. How could they go on without him? And Prabhupāda felt the same way.

Brahmānanda managed to find a lawyer to delay the proceedings of the immigration office. The threat of deportation passed. Prabhupāda spoke of going to Montreal and getting permanent residency there, but his main intention was to stay in America and cultivate what he had begun.

Brahmānanda reported to Prabhupāda about printing the Bhagavad-gītā. The manuscript was ready, and they were considering the costs and where to print it, even though they didn't have enough money to publish the book themselves. They hadn't seriously attempted the arduous process of finding a publisher, but Prabhupāda pushed Brahmānanda to do so: "The only hope is that I have my books."

Brahmānanda also talked with Prabhupāda about the six thousand dollars he had lost to Mr. Price. Prabhupāda insisted that they prosecute the culprits. He sent Brahmānanda to speak with various lawyers and also to tell Mr. Price and Mr. Tyler that "His Excellency" was back and would take them to court.

At that they relented. Mr. Tyler refunded most of the \$5,000 deposit, and Mr. Price returned \$750 of the \$1,000 he had wheedled out of Brahmānanda. The legal services had cost more than a thousand dollars—so that was lost—but Prabhupāda said that when dealing with a tiger you can expect to get scratched.

In a letter to Kīrtanānanda in Montreal, Prabhupāda described the successful termination of the Price affair: "You will be glad to know that I have been able, by Grace of Krishna, to recover \$4227... out of the \$5000.00 gone in the belly of Sir Conman Fraud (Price)..."

There were signs that Prabhupāda should be cautious about his health. He had gone through difficulty while appearing on the Allen Burke TV show. Allen Burke was known for sitting back, smoking a cigar, and saying outrageous, even insulting, things to his guests; and if a guest became offended, Mr. Burke would provoke him all the more. It was a popular show.

Before they went on the air, Mr. Burke had asked Prabhupāda's permission to smoke a cigar, and Prabhupāda had graciously consented. Mr. Burke had introduced his guest as "a real swami." When he had asked Prabhupāda why he was against sex, Prabhupāda had said he wasn't; sex should be restricted to marriage for raising Kṛṣṇa conscious children. But Mr. Burke had persisted, wanting to know what was wrong with sex outside of marriage. The real purpose of human life, Śrīla Prabhupāda had replied, was self-realization. When one's mind is preoccupied with capturing new sex partners, keeping the mental peace necessary for self-realization becomes impossible. Mr. Burke had agreed. In fact, his manners had been the best ever. And at the end he had called Prabhupāda "a very charming gentleman."

It was on his way home to the temple that Śrīla Prabhupāda had said that the TV lights had caused him so much pain in his head that at one point he had thought he would not be able to continue.

Then one day Rūpānuga, sitting close to Prabhupāda's dais during a lecture, noticed Prabhupāda's hand shaking as he spoke. Kīrtanānanda had been there when months ago, the morning after they had made the record, Prabhupāda had slept late and complained of his heart skipping and of not being able to move. "If I ever get badly sick," Śrīla Prabhupāda had told Kīrtanānanda, "don't call a doctor. Don't take me to a hospital. Just give me my beads and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Swamiji's disciples were reluctant to restrain him. Kīrtanānanda had tried. At the Avalon, when Swamiji had been dancing and jumping and streaming with perspiration, Kīrtanānanda had insisted that the kīrtana stop. But the others had called him paranoid.

Besides, Swamiji didn't like to be restrained. And who were they to restrain him? He was Kṛṣṇa's empowered representative, able to surmount any difficulty. He was a pure devotee. He could do anything. Hadn't he often described how a pure devotee is transcendental to material pangs?

Swamiji had written a letter consoling a disciple's ailing grandmother.

All our ailments are due to the external body. Although we have to suffer some time from bodily inconveniences specially in the old age, still if we are God conscious, we shall not feel the pangs. The best thing is therefore to chant the holy Name of the Lord Constantly.

The devotees figured that although Swamiji might give good instructions to someone's old grandmother, nothing like what had befallen her was ever going to affect him. Of course, he referred to himself as an old man, but that was mostly in lectures to show the inevitability of old age.

To the devotees, Prabhupāda's health appeared strong. His eyes shone brightly with spiritual emotions, his complexion was smooth and golden, and his smile was a display of health and well-being. One time, one of the boys said that Swamiji's smile was so virile that it made him think of a bull and iron nails. Swamiji was taking cold showers, going on early morning walks around the Lower East Side, playing mṛdaṅga, eating well. Even if his disciples wanted to slow him down, what could they do?

Some of his disciples had actually tried to prevent him from attending the controversial Cosmic Love-In at the East Village Theater, but not because of his health; they had wanted to protect his U.S. residency case. Śrīla Prabhupāda had been invited to attend the Love-In, a fund-raising show for Louis Abolafia, the "Love and Peace" presidential candidate. Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, and others were attending, along with a full line-up of rock bands. But when Prabhupāda's lawyer heard that he was going, he said it might jeopardize the visa case. Some of the boys took up the lawyer's opinion and opposed Prabhupāda's plan. Prabhu pāda agreed that it might be best if he didn't go. But on the day of the Cosmic Love-In he changed his mind and decided to go anyway. "I came to this country to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness," he declared. Now it was time to speak against these LSD leaders who claimed to be spiritualists. He had been saying that although he wanted to go, he wouldn't go if his disciples forbade him. But in the end he simply said he was going. And that was that.

During the last week of May, Śrīla Prabhupāda began to feel exhausted. He spoke of heart palpitations. Hoping that the symptoms would clear up in a day or two, Kīrtanānanda requested Prabhupāda to rest and see no visitors. But Prabhupāda's condition became worse.

Kīrtanānanda: Swamiji began to complain that his left arm wasn't functioning properly. And then he began to develop a twitching in his left side, and his left arm would twitch uncontrollably. It seemed to pain him in some mysterious way, internally or psychologically.

Acyutānanda: It was Sunday, two days before Memorial Day, and we had arranged a large program in the afternoon in a hall uptown. I went up to get Swamiji, since all the devotees were ready. Swamiji was lying down, and his face was pale. He said, "Feel my heart." And I felt a quivering vibration in his chest.

I went down but didn't want to alert everyone and panic them. I went to Kīrtanānanda and quietly said, "The Swami is having some kind of mild heart palpitations." And immediately we both flew back up. Swamiji said, "Just massage here." So I rubbed him on the chest, and he showed me how. He said, "The others go, and Acyutānanda can stay here. If anything happens, he can call you."

So the others went and did the program, and I waited. Once or twice he called me in and had me quickly rub over his chest. Then he looked up, and his color had come back. I was staring with my mouth open, wondering what to do. He looked at me and said, "Why are you sitting idle? Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." During the evening, palpitations again occurred, so I slept in the room next to his. And late at night he called me in and again had me massage.

Kīrtanānanda: It was on Tuesday afternoon, Memorial Day, and I was sitting with Swamiji in his room. While kīrtana was going on downstairs, the twitching began again. The Swamiji's face began to tighten up. His eyes started rolling. Then all of a sudden he threw himself back, and I caught him. He was gasping: "Hare Kṛṣṇa." And then everything stopped. I thought it was the last, until his breathing started again, and with it the chanting. But he didn't regain control over his body.

Brahmānanda: I was there along with Kīrtanānanda. It was on Memorial Day weekend. We couldn't understand what was wrong with Swamiji. He couldn't sit up, he was moaning, and nobody knew what was happening. We nursed him—myself and Kīrtanānanda—trying all different things. I had to go out and buy a bedpan for him.

Prabhupāda's left side was paralyzed. He asked that a picture of his spiritual master be put on the wall in front of him. Thinking that Prabhupāda was preparing to leave his body and wanted to meditate at the last moment on his spiritual master, Acyutānanda taped it to the door facing Prabhupāda.

Devotees entered the front room of the apartment, and Prabhupāda told them to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Then he told them to pray to Kṛṣṇa in His form of Nṛsiṃhadeva.

Satsvarūpa: Swamiji said we should pray to Lord Nṛsiṃha and the prayer should be "My master has not finished his work." At different times he would allow us to take turns and massage different parts of his body. Then he had us go downstairs and hold kīrtana through the night.

Jadurāṇī: He taught us the prayers to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva. He said the words one by one, and I wrote them down. I called up the temples in San Francisco and Montreal and told them the prayer. Swamiji said, "You should pray to Kṛṣṇa that, my spiritual master has not yet completed his work, so please let him finish."

Dāmodara: I went into the temple. No one was downstairs, so I just sat down to chant some rounds. Then a devotee came down looking very disturbed, so I asked what was going on. When he told me, I rushed upstairs. Everyone was sitting around in the second room, where they could see into Swamiji's room through the window in the wall. They were all chanting on their beads. Jadurāṇī was handing out little slips of paper with writing on them. Swamiji, she explained, wanted us to chant these prayers.

Brahmānanda: We brought the painting of Lord Nṛsimha into Swamiji's room, and we were all chanting. When Swamiji had to use the bedpan in front of Lord Nṛsimha's painting, he begged forgiveness of Lord Nṛsimha. He could understand that Lord Nṛsimha was sitting right in front of him. I saw it as a painting, but Swamiji saw it as Lord Nṛsimha Himself sitting there.

It was getting worse—total weakness and everything. I couldn't get a doctor, because it was Memorial Day and everything was closed. I even called my family doctor, but he wasn't in. Everyone had gone on vacation, because on Memorial Day everyone leaves the city. I couldn't get anyone. I was calling hospitals, doctors—trying this and that. But I couldn't get anyone. Finally I got a doctor by calling an emergency number for the New York City medical department. The doctor came. He was an old geezer with a real loud voice. When he saw Swamiji he said, "I think the old man is praying too much. I think he should get some exercise. He should go out for a walk in the morning."

Acyutānanda: The doctor didn't know very much. He said that Swamiji had a cold. I said, "What do you mean? His heart is palpitating."

"Hmm, I don't know what to do. Does he take any whiskey?"

I said, "He doesn't even drink coffee or tea."

"Ohhhh, very good, very good. Well, I think he has just got a cold."

Dvārakādhīśa dāsa: He came and took a look at the place, and you could tell right away he didn't like what he saw. He thought we were just a bunch of hippies. He couldn't wait to get out of the place. But he said, "Oh, he's got influenza." That was a ridiculous diagnosis. And then he said, "Give me my money." We paid him, the doctor left, and Swamiji got worse.

The devotees called a second doctor, who came and diagnosed Śrīla Prabhupāda as having had a mild heart attack. He said that Prabhupāda should at once go to the hospital.

Max Lerner (a lawyer friend of the devotees): I got a call one day that the Swami had had a mild heart attack and I could be of some help. At that time they were going to take him to Bellevue Hospital, but I suggested that at least I could try to get him into a private hospital. After several hours of talking and negotiating with people at the hospital, we were able to get Swamiji into Beth Israel Hospital.

Brahmānanda: The day after Memorial Day we had to arrange for an ambulance. Beth Israel had no ambulance, so I called a private ambulance company. It was all arranged with the hospital that

Swamiji would arrive at nine o'clock that morning. But the ambulance didn't come until about noon. During this time Swamiji kept moaning. Then finally the ambulance came, and they were horrible guys. They treated Swamiji like a bundle of cloth. I thought it would have been better if we had taken Swamiji in a cab.

Except for Kīrtanānanda, who stayed in Prabhupāda's hospital room as a nurse, no one else was allowed to stay. They all went back to the temple to chant through the night, as Prabhupāda had requested. Kīrtanānanda phoned Hayagrīva in San Francisco and told him what had happened—how Swamiji had suddenly fallen back and cried out, “Hare Kṛṣṇa!” and how there had been nothing for about thirty seconds... and then a big gasp: “Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hare Kṛṣṇa!” Kīrtanānanda told Hayagrīva that the devotees in San Francisco should chant all night and pray to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva:

tava kara-kamala-vare nakham adbhūta-śṛṅgam

dalita-hiraṇyakaśipu-tanu-bhṛṅgam

keśava dhṛta-narahari-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare

Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, the half-man, half-lion incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, had appeared in another age to save His pure devotee Prahlada and kill the demon Hirāṇyakaśipu. Prabhupāda had asked his disciples to pray to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva by chanting the special mantra and thinking, “Our master has not finished his work. Please protect him.” The boys went back to the temple and chanted together, but after a few hours they fell asleep. They wanted to rest so that they could go to the hospital the next day.

Haridāsa: When we heard about it in San Francisco, there was grief, and people were crying. There was a tremendous love and thinking about Swamiji and just concentration, a mass concentration of pulling him through, giving him strength and summoning the help of Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya and everybody we could possibly call upon to lend their energies. People came into the temple doing rosaries, and whatever faiths or beliefs or trips they were on, they were directing that toward a healing. They were all chanting with us.

Hayagrīva: It's a night I'll never forget. We turn on the altar lights behind the Jagannāthas, light candles, and chant in the flickering shadows. It is solemn chanting and even more solemn dancing. News quickly spreads down Haight Street, and soon the temple is crowded with others come to chant with us through the night.

Mukunda and Jānakī phoned New York. But there is no additional information. Kīrtanānanda is spending the night in the hospital beside Swamiji's bed. No one else is being allowed in. Hospital regulations. Yes, everyone in New York is chanting.

We chant past midnight. Most of the guests leave, but none of us yet feel sleepy. The chanting overtakes us in waves. My mind wanders to Swamiji, to New York, to the future, to the past... I have to yank it back into the room to confront the present, to realize why we are here chanting, to

petition Śrī Kṛṣṇa to spare our master a little longer to allow him to spread Lord Caitanya's glorious saṅkīrtana movement around the world.

The chanting is always here, insistent.

By two A.M. I begin to tire. I change instruments just to keep awake, sometimes playing mṛdaṅga, sometimes cymbals or harmonium. Many dance to stay awake. The girls serve prasādam—sliced apples. It is dangerous to sit next to the wall—an invitation to doze off. We are so frail.

Hare Kṛṣṇa soothes. The chanting releases us from so much needless fretting. Through it we can relieve tensions, grieve, plead, and hope.

It is between three and four A.M. The most ecstatic hour, the brāhma-muhūrta hour before the dawn. If he is alive at this hour, surely he will live.

We sing. We chant on beads. Constant Hare Kṛṣṇa. We chant through the usual seven A.M. kīrtana hour and into the morning. We chant fourteen hours without cessation. We cleanse the dust from the mind's mirror. We see Kṛṣṇa and Swamiji everywhere. Surely now he is well!

During the night, Śrīla Prabhupāda's heart pained him. The next day he remained in critical condition. He could speak but softly and was too exhausted to converse. Skeptical of the doctors, he diagnosed himself: a heart attack affecting part of his brain, thus paralyzing the left side of his body. Massage, he said, was the cure.

On the morning of June 1, other disciples joined Kīrtanānanda in Prabhupāda's room and by taking shifts were able to give Prabhupāda a constant massage. They took turns massaging his head, chest, and legs as he directed. This simple act drew each of them into an intimate relationship with him.

When Prabhupāda heard that not only in New York but in San Francisco also the devotees had chanted and prayed all night, he expressed satisfaction, not by his usual hearty smile but by a very slight nodding and an approving sound. Despite his weakness, he was fully conscious.

The doctors, or more often their aides, took blood, gave injections, and investigated. Their diagnosis wasn't conclusive: they had plans for experiments. Then suddenly a doctor came in and announced their next move: a spinal tap. Prabhupāda was too weak to discuss the pros and cons of a spinal tap. He had put himself in the care of his disciples and Kṛṣṇa.

The doctor didn't want to be impeded. He explained why a spinal tap was necessary, but he wasn't asking for consultation or permission. Everyone—except for Kīrtanānanda, who insisted on staying—had to leave the room while the doctor performed the spinal tap. Neither Prabhupāda, who was too weak, nor his boys, who were uncertain how to act on his behalf, opposed the doctor. The devotees filed out of Prabhupāda's room while the doctor readied the largest, most frightening needle they had ever seen.

When they were allowed back, one disciple asked cautiously, "Did it hurt, Swamiji?" Śrīla Prabhupāda, his golden-skinned form wrapped in white hospital garments and lying between the white sheets, turned slightly and said, "We are tolerant."

Rūpānuga: When Swamiji was first admitted to the hospital, it was very hard for me. I didn't know how I should act. I didn't have much experience with this kind of emergency. I was very uncertain as to what service to do for Swamiji. It was a frightening experience.

Swamiji's life was at stake, yet his disciples didn't know what to do to save him. He lay on the bed as if at their mercy. But the hospital staff considered him their property—an old man with heart trouble, a subject of investigation. And for Swamiji's disciples this was a hundred times worse than dealing with Mr. Price and company. Now it was not just a matter of risking money but of risking Swamiji! Should they allow the EEG? What was an EEG? Was an operation necessary? An operation! But Swamiji had said that he should never even be brought to a hospital. "Give me massage," was all he had said, and "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

When Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned his preference for the Āyur Vedic medical treatments available in India, some of the devotees suggested they bring a doctor from India. After considering the expense, Prabhupāda decided to send a letter first. Unable to sit up or write, he slowly dictated a letter to Sri Krishna Pandit, who had given him quarters for several years in his temple in Delhi. Satsvarūpa read it back to Prabhupāda and then typed it right there in Prabhupāda's hospital room.

I am writing this letter from the hospital. All of a sudden I have developed some headache, as well as throbbing of the chest. When I rub my chest I feel some sensation in my left hand and when I rub my left hand I feel sensation in my chest. My left hand no more works independently. I therefore ask you if there is any good Vedic physician in Mathura who can send me some medicines, that is, you purchase and send them by air mail to our temple: ISKCON, 26 2nd Ave., New York, N. Y. The symptom is predominantly when I get severe pain within my head. And the trembling of the left hand is coming every ten or fifteen minutes. I am afraid if this is not a disease like Lakhya; the boys are taking utmost care of me, there is no scarcity of care. But still after all, this body is subject to death. I came here with a great mission to execute my Spiritual Master's order but my heart is stabbing me. Of course, I'm not afraid of Maya, I know Maya cannot touch me, but still if I die in this condition, my mission will remain unfulfilled. Please therefore pray to Prabhu Lord Chaitanya and Vrindaban Bihar, to rescue me this time, my mission is still not finished. I wish to live for a few more days. They're prepared to call an experienced Ayur Vedic physician who treats such diseases but I've not allowed the boys. But if necessary, if you can give me an expert physician who can travel here we can send necessary money for his coming here or arrange for air ticket. You can consult the man in charge of Dacca Shakti.

At last I may inform you that I am inclined toward Ayur Vedic treatment. You can consult the Ayur Vedic physician in Vrindaban who is a Goudiya Vaishnava. He knows me very well. He sells my books also.

Two things are to be done if it is possible; to send me proper medicines and directions, that will be nice. But if I require to return that also I can do. Please try to reply as soon as possible in English because my students cannot read Hindi. So long as I'm in bed it's not possible to read letters. You

can treat this letter very urgently. Consult necessary physicians and let me know what I am to do. In Mathura there are undoubtedly many Ayur Vedic physicians and many quacks also. Try to avoid the quacks. I would have returned to India immediately but the doctors say it is risky. If need be, I shall return as soon as I get strength to take the strain of the journey.

I repeat my symptoms so that you can take necessary care. All of a sudden I developed some throbbing between the heart and stomach about 4 days ago. I was so exhaustive, it was like fainting—then I consulted a doctor who came and gave me medicine but it was of no good effect therefore my students at once transferred me to the hospital where they're spending more or less 400 rupees daily. There is no question of neglect. All scientific treatment is going on. But I think Ayur Vedic medicine will be proper. Therefore I request you to take immediate steps and reply me.

I hope this letter will convince you the actual position. While reading this letter you may consult some friend who knows English very well so that he'll read it correctly and reply correctly. There is no scope for corresponding in Bengali or in Hindi.

By Kṛṣṇa's grace, on the afternoon of Śrīla Prabhupāda's second day in the hospital he showed slight improvement. His heart was still causing him pain, his facial expression remained grave, with never a smile, but he was a bit stronger. The interns, nurses, and doctors came and went on schedule, treating him—impersonally. One doctor did seem a little interested in what Prabhupāda was all about, and at Prabhupāda's request, Kīrtanānanda played a taped lecture for the doctor. He listened politely, but then said, "It doesn't ring a bell."

The doctor said that he wanted to run a few more tests and that Swamiji might be able to leave after a few weeks—if all went well. Śrīla Prabhupāda tried speaking to the doctor, wanting to explain about Kṛṣṇa. Jadurāṇī had brought two of her paintings to the hospital room— one of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the other of the fierce half-lion, half-man incarnation, Lord Nṛsimha, tearing apart the demon Hiranyakaśipu. Speaking in a very low voice, Prabhupāda said that these two pictures show how God is many-sided: "Here He is in His loving exchange, and here also we see that anger comes from Kṛṣṇa, or God."

The doctor politely said that he had his own philosophy and that Swamiji shouldn't be preaching while in such weak health; he should rest. Advising the disciples not to allow their guru to speak, the doctor excused himself and continued his rounds.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, with his slight improvement, expressed more disapproval of being in the hands of the hospital personnel. They weren't able to do anything, he said. Kṛṣṇa was in control: "If Kṛṣṇa wants to kill you, then no one can save you. But if Kṛṣṇa wants to save you, then no one can kill you."

Dāmodara: I was there when a doctor came in to check his reflexes. There was the usual tapping with a little rubber hammer on his knee—that kind of thing. Swamiji was visibly annoyed with this man's coming in and tapping him all over. He was capable of diagnosing and giving the prescription for the cure, and it annoyed him that these men, who obviously didn't know what they were doing, were coming in and interfering with the process of recuperation.

Acyutānanda: The nurse would always let the door slam, and every time it slammed Swamiji would wince. He said, "Tell her not to slam the door". She would say, "Okay," and then she would let it slam again.

Śrīla Prabhupāda began sitting up in bed and taking prasādam from the temple, supplemented by some of the vegetarian items on the hospital menu. He would say a prayer and offer the hospital food to the picture of his spiritual master. The devotees would sit at his feet, watching him as he then mixed with his right hand the carrots, peas, and mashed potatoes. And he would always distribute some of his food into the hands of his disciples.

Jadurāṇī: We brought him many different kinds of fruit. We told him we had brought apples, but he was so tired he only said, "Oh" and seemed disinterested. We told him we had brought oranges, but again— "Oh." He gave so many tired "Oh"s he seemed disinterested. Finally I said, "We brought you watermelons," and immediately his face lit up— "Ohhh !"

Rotating in four-hour shifts, two devotees at a time were always with Prabhupāda. Although awake, he would remain silent for long intervals; but massaging always continued, except when he was asleep. Gradually, the paralysis on his left side went away.

Once while Śrīla Prabhupāda was sitting up in bed, one boy massaging his leg and another softly, almost consolingly, stroking the back of his neck, Prabhupāda remarked that if he were not sick he would have considered the massaging and rubbing too familiar.

Dāmodara: I was massaging Swamiji's temples with one hand, my thumb on one temple and other fingers on the other temple. As I was massaging, Swamiji kept saying, "Harder ! Harder!" and I would squeeze harder. I thought, "Gee, I don't know if I should squeeze so hard, because he's sick." But he kept insisting: "Harder! Harder!"

Puruṣottama: I was massaging Swamiji's head, and I started singing the chant śrī kṛṣṇa-caitanya. When I started singing, a very beautiful smile came on his face. Although I did it only briefly, he took pleasure in hearing. He seemed to take it that I was ministering to him just by singing śrī kṛṣṇa-caitanya.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda gained strength, his disciples were ready with questions. Puruṣottama asked, "Swamiji, in the scriptures when it describes the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, what does that mean—lotus feet?"

Prabhupāda then sang a verse:

samāśritā ye pada-pallava-plavaṇi

mahat-padaṁ puṇya-yaśo murāreḥ

bhavāmbudhir vatsa-padaṁ paraṁ padaṁ

padaṁ padaṁ yad vipadāṁ na teṣāṁ

Then he asked the three devotees present to repeat each line after him again and again, until they had learned both the tune and the words. "In this verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*," Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, sitting up in his bed, "the time of death is compared to crossing a vast ocean. It is very fearful. One doesn't know where he will go in the next life. And at every step there is danger in the material world. But for one who has taken shelter at the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, that vast, dangerous ocean of birth and death becomes shrunk up to no more than the impression made in mud by a calf's hoofprint. There is danger, but the devotee doesn't care for it. Just like if a gentleman is riding by in a carriage and he passes a small puddle, he considers it insignificant. So do you understand now what 'lotus feet' means?" It was clear.

Then Puruṣottama asked another question: "Why do people say that God has no name?" Śrīla Prabhupāda replied by asking why, since God is everything, He should not have a name. "In fact," he said, "all names are describing Kṛṣṇa." Prabhupāda asked Puruṣottama what his name had been before initiation.

"Paul," he said.

"What does Paul mean?" Prabhupāda asked.

"It means 'little.'"

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "that is Kṛṣṇa. He is the smallest of the small."

Satsvarūpa then volunteered his name, Stephen, which means "crown."

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, "Kṛṣṇa is the king."

But discussions were rare. Usually the hours were quiet. Prabhupāda rested, and the devotees on watch sat in chairs on opposite sides of his bed, reading or chanting softly on their beads. Late one afternoon, as the Manhattan sky turned to twilight, Prabhupāda sat up after having been silent for an hour and said, "I don't know Kṛṣṇa, but I know my Guru Mahārāja."

One day Brahmānanda began giving Prabhupāda a minute breakdown of the financial condition of the New York temple. In the midst of the detailed report, Brahmānanda suddenly stopped, looked up at Prabhupāda, and said, "Do you want me to tell all the details? I thought you would want me to let you know. I mean, you should know." Prabhupāda replied that if Brahmānanda could take care of everything without his knowing the details, that would be all right.

Suddenly one morning, Swami Satcidananda, the famous haṭha-yoga guru, entered Prabhupāda's room, grinning through his big gray beard. He was dressed in a saffron silk kurtā and yogī pants and accompanied by one of his young American male disciples. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat up in bed, smiling at the pleasant surprise. They had not met before. Śrīla Prabhupāda offered Swami Satcidananda a seat at his bedside and asked Jadurāṇī to stand and give her seat to Swami Satcidananda's disciple.

Prabhupāda and Swami Satcidananda spoke in Hindi, and no one else in the room could follow their conversation. At one point, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda held up his hand and looked at it with indifference and then with disgust. Although his words were Hindi, the gesture and sardonic expression conveyed his meaning: the body was material and therefore could not be expected to be well.

Prabhupāda asked Acyutānanda to read aloud from a particular purport of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

If there is enough milk, enough grains, enough fruit, enough cotton, enough silk and enough jewels then why the people need for economic development in the shape of machine and tools? Can the machine and tools supply vigour and vitality to the man and animals? Can the machinery produce grains, fruits and milk or jewellery or silk? Is not jewellery and silk, varieties of food stuff prepared with ghee and grains or milk and fruits sufficient for man's pure luxurious and healthy life? Then why there is artificial luxurious life of cinema, cars, radio, flesh and hotels? Has this civilisation produced any good result more than the dog's mentality of quarreling with one another individually and nationally? Has this civilisation enhanced the cause of equality and fraternity by sending thousands of men in the hellish factory and the war fields at the whims of a particular man?

When Prabhupāda offered to play the record he and his disciples had made, Swami Satcidananda politely agreed. But when Prabhupāda offered to play the other side of the record, Swami Satcidananda said he had to leave. He offered Prabhupāda some fruits, and Prabhupāda, after accepting them, told his disciples, "Distribute these, and give him some of our fruit in exchange."

As Swami Satcidananda rose to leave, Śrīla Prabhupāda suddenly got out of bed and stood shakily. "No, no, no." Swami Satcidananda protested. "Don't disturb yourself." And then he was gone, escorted by Acyutānanda. Śrīla Prabhupāda lay back in bed.

"Is he a swami?" Jadurāṇī asked.

"Why not?" Prabhupāda replied. But after a few moments he added, "Swami means one who knows Kṛṣṇa." There was no more talk about it, but Prabhupāda was pleased by the unexpected visit.

The constant coming and going of Śrīla Prabhupāda's young followers, wearing tilaka on their foreheads and carrying watermelons, special food, flowers, and paintings of Kṛṣṇa, created a special interest among the hospital staff. Sometimes workers would ask questions, and sometimes the devotees would talk with them about the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Once a nurse came by Prabhupāda's room and asked, "In the caste system in India, what is the name of the highest caste? What are they called?"

"Kṛṣṇa conscious," Prabhupāda firmly replied. He asked a disciple to give the nurse prasādam.

On June 5 Prabhupāda received an affectionate letter signed by all his disciples in San Francisco. After reading how they had stayed up all night chanting and praying for his recovery, he dictated a short letter.

My dear boys and girls,

I am so much obliged to you for your prayers to Krishna to save my life. Due to your sincere and ardent prayer, Krishna has saved my life. I was to die on Tuesday certainly but because you prayed sincerely I am saved. Now I am improving gradually and coming to original condition. Now I can hope to meet you again and chant with you Hare Krishna. I am so glad to receive the report of your progressive march and hope there will be no difficulty in your understanding Krishna consciousness. My blessings are always with you and with confidence you go on with your chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

The following day a tape arrived from Mukunda: a recording of the San Francisco devotees singing śrī rāma jaya rāma jaya jaya rāma and other bhajanas. Prabhupāda dictated another letter, saying that as soon as he got strength for traveling he would come again to San Francisco.

"In the meantime," he wrote, "I shall be very glad to know what arrangements you are going to do for the Ratha-yātrā festival. Make it a grand procession and unique introduction in the United States."

Some of Swamiji's disciples gathered in the storefront at 26 Second Avenue one night. Sitting around on the faded rug, they discussed the meaning of Swamiji's illness. He had said that when the heart attack had come, it had been meant for his death; therefore he had called out loudly, "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" thinking that the moment of death had come. Kīrtanānanda remembered that Swamiji had once told him that when he was on the boat coming to America the captain's wife had read his palm and said that if he survived his seventy-first year he would live to be a hundred.

Madhusūdana asked, "How could a pure devotee be subject to a death blow?" Kīrtanānanda replied that it was impersonal to think that because Swamiji was a pure devotee nothing could happen to him and that they should not even worry about him. Of course, the apparent suffering or even the passing away of a pure devotee wasn't the same as an ordinary man's. Swamiji had given the example of the cat: sometimes she carries her kittens in her mouth, and sometimes she catches a mouse in the same jaws. The mouse feels the jaws of death, but the kitten feels safety and affection. So although Swamiji's death call might have appeared similar to an ordinary man's, for Swamiji there had been no fear or danger.

As the disciples discussed their realizations, they began to clear away their doubts about why such an apparent setback had come upon their spiritual master. Satsvarūpa mentioned the letter he had typed for Swamiji at the hospital. In the letter Swamiji had said he was not afraid of māyā and could not be touched by māyā. But he had also referred to being stabbed by his heart. Brahmānanda said that Swamiji had once told him that a spiritual master may suffer for the sins of his disciples, because he has to take their karma. Swamiji now had about fifty disciples, so maybe that had been the cause of his heart attack. They talked about the importance of being very strict and not committing any sins with which to burden their spiritual master.

Another reason for Swamiji's illness, Kīrtanānanda said, was that Kṛṣṇa had arranged it to engage them all in intimate service to Swamiji. By serving a pure devotee, one gains the favor of Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa was letting them all become purified by massaging and serving Swamiji so intimately.

Satsvarūpa recalled that Swamiji had said in a letter to the devotees in San Francisco that he was supposed to have died but their prayers had saved him. Swamiji had told Kīrtanānanda that Kṛṣṇa had heard the devotees' prayers and had granted their wishes. Kṛṣṇa was allowing Swamiji to go on with his mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. It wasn't on his own behalf that Swamiji wanted to live, but to continue his mission.

Everyone agreed with Kīrtanānanda that it was a form of impersonalism for them to think that because Swamiji was a pure devotee he didn't need their loving care. They should continue to care for Swamiji even after he got better. He had put himself in their care, and they had to reciprocate accordingly. Swamiji had said they were like fathers to him; so they should not allow him to play the drum long and vigorously, to sing in the park for hours, to stay up talking late at night, or to do anything that might endanger his health.

Rāya Rāma said that Swamiji had asked him to reply to several letters from devotees on the West Coast and explain that he would probably never again be able to take on the strain of public lectures; the saṅkīrtana movement now rested on their shoulders. Rāya Rāma had explained in his letters that it was Kṛṣṇa's grace that Swamiji was still with them and able to advise them when things got rough; but now they must increase their efforts to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the world.

The talk turned to the need for them to realize Swamiji's instructions and become strong devotees. Everyone agreed that they could do this by studying Swamiji's books more carefully and always acting according to his instructions.

When they told Prabhupāda about their philosophical discussions, he replied only briefly: "Kṛṣṇa heard all your sincere prayers, and He thought, 'All right, let him stay and do his nonsense—so many devotees are praying on his behalf.'"

* * *

Before Prabhupāda's illness, the devotees had planned a big event in Tompkins Square Park for Sunday, June 4. The parks department had given them the use of a loudspeaker system and the stage in the band shell. Mr. Kallman, producer of the Hare Kṛṣṇa record, had encouraged them to advertise and had gotten in touch with the TV stations. The devotees had begun making Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra signs so that everyone, even the TV viewer, could chant.

Although now unable to go, Śrīla Prabhupāda said they should still have their festival; he would compose a special address for Kīrtanānanda to read to the public. From his hospital bed he dictated the short speech: "An Address to American Youth," by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.

On June 4, several hundred people gathered around the band shell in Tompkins Square Park, while the devotees played harmonium, karatālas, and mṛdaṅgas and chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa over the P.A.

system. Many people in the crowd chanted along, playing their own instruments and even joining the devotees onstage.

Kīrtanānanda stood before the microphone and announced that Bhaktivedanta Swami, although ill at Beth Israel Hospital, had prepared a message for everyone. Many among the Lower East Side crowd were acquainted with Bhaktivedanta Swami and his chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. They listened as Kīrtanānanda read.

My dear young beautiful boys and girls of America,

I have come to your country with great hope and a great mission. My Spiritual Master, Om Vishnupad Paramahansa Paribrajaka Acharya Sri Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaja, asked me to preach this cult of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the Western world. That was the seed-giving incident. Gradually the seed fructified, and I was prepared to come to the Western world. Still, I do not know why I was so much attracted by the land of America. But from within Krishna dictated that instead of going to Europe I should better go to America. So you can see that I have come to your country under order of superior authority. And even after arriving here, when I perceived that some of the youngsters are being misled, confused and frustrated—this is not the condition of your country only, but in every country, the young people are neglected, although it is they who are the flower and future hope of everyone—so I thought to myself that if I go to the American youth with my message and they join with me in this movement, then it will spread all over the world, and then all the problems of the world will be solved. How I would like to be with you in person today, but Krishna has prevented that, so please pardon me and accept my blessings in this written form.

This process of samkīrtan—this singing and dancing—is so nice because from the very beginning it places everyone on the spiritual platform. There are different platforms or levels to our existence: the bodily platform, the mental platform, the intellectual platform, and the spiritual platform. When you stand on the spiritual platform, then all the problems created by the necessities of the body, mind, intellect, and ego become solved. Therefore I appeal to you to join this movement most seriously. The process is very simple: we ask everyone to come join with us in chanting, hear something of the philosophy of life taught by Lord Krishna, take a little prasadam (foodstuff that is prepared and offered to the Lord), and peacefully, with refreshed mind, go home. That is our mission.

We do have certain restrictions; practically, they are not restrictions, but something better in place of something inferior. The other day, Mr. Alan Burke questioned me on his television program, "Swamiji, why do you insist on marriage?" And I answered him, "Unless one becomes peaceful in home life, how can he make any advance in any other area of life or knowledge? Therefore everyone should get married—just to be happy and peaceful." You are all beautiful, nice, educated boys and girls—why shouldn't you get married and live happily? If you live peacefully regulated lives, eating nothing but Krishna prasadam, then the tissues in your brain will develop for spiritual consciousness and understanding.

However, if you are not agreeable to these simple restrictions, still I request you to join the chanting with us. Everybody can do that, and that will gradually clarify everything, and all problems will be solved, and you will find a new chapter of your life. Just this week I have received a letter from a girl in New Jersey who has had such an experience. She writes:

“Dear Swamiji, “You don't know me by name, but I am the girl who joined your parade in Washington Square this past Saturday.

“When I first saw your group I thought you were all crazy. Either that or on dope of some kind. After listening and talking with some of you I realized that it was neither of those. You people plainly believed in what you were doing and I admired you for that much; but my curiosity drove me further and I had to find out why. So I followed you, and as I did, the chant you sang began to take hold. The next thing I knew I felt free of myself and I was singing too. I didn't know where I was or where I was going but I was too elated to care. It wasn't until we stopped that I learned where I was.

“By that time I had picked up bits and pieces of what Krishna Consciousness was about. One of your members asked me to visit your temple and I followed you still further, hoping to discover just what it was that made you feel so strong about something I'd never heard of.

“After having taken a meal with you and reading your literature I left; but not alone. I took with me a new awareness of life. It occurred to me how futile my desires for the material things in life were: that a new dress, or big house, or color television were not important. If only people would open their eyes to the endless number of pleasures God has already given us, there would be no need for looking any further.

“You people are truly lucky. You may have had to do without many things, but because of this you are able to enjoy the simple God-given treasures of the world. Because of your beliefs, you are the wealthy; and I thank you for sharing a bit of that wealth with me.”

So we invite you to please chant with us—it is such a nice thing. Come to our temple if you like, take a little prasadam, and be happy. It is not very difficult if you just chant this HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA, KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE, HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE. That will save you. Thank you very much, and God bless you.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda was eager to leave the hospital. For several days he had wanted to go. “They are simply sticking needles,” he complained. And each day was putting his Society into further debt. The devotees had rented a small seaside house in Long Branch, New Jersey, where Prabhupāda could go to recuperate. Kīrtanānanda, they decided, would be Prabhupāda's cook, and Gaurasundara and his wife, Govinda dāsī, were arriving from San Francisco to do the housekeeping and help. But the doctor wanted Prabhupāda to stay for another brain wave test and more observation.

One day while Brahmānanda and Gargamuni were visiting Prabhupāda, the doctor entered and announced that the Swami would have to go downstairs for an X ray.

"No needle?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Yes," the doctor replied, "it's all right."

When the nurse brought in a bed on wheels, Prabhupāda said he wanted Gargamuni to push it. He then sat on it cross-legged and put his hand in his bead bag, and Gargamuni, following the nurse, wheeled him out the door, down the hall, and onto the elevator. They went down to the third floor and entered a room. The nurse left them alone. Gargamuni could sense Prabhupāda's uneasiness. He was also nervous. It was such an unlikely place for him to be with his spiritual master. Then a different nurse entered, with a needle: "Time to give the Swami a little injection."

"No." Prabhupāda shook his head.

"I'm sorry," Gargamuni said flatly. "We're not going to do it."

The nurse was exasperated but smiled: "It won't hurt."

"Take me back," Prabhupāda ordered Gargamuni. When the nurse insisted, Gargamuni acted rashly—his usual tendency—and stepped between the nurse and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I'm ready to fight if I have to, Gargamuni thought. "I won't let you do it," he said and wheeled the bed out of the room, leaving the nurse behind.

Gargamuni was lost. He was somewhere on the third or fourth floor, faced with corridors and doors. And Prabhupāda's room was on the sixth floor. Unsure where he was going, Gargamuni wheeled through the corridors with Prabhupāda sitting cross-legged, chanting on his beads.

Brahmānanda arrived at the X-ray lab seconds after Gargamuni's escape. The nurse and an intern complained to him about what had happened.

Brahmānanda: They considered this a theft. Swamiji was their property. As long as he was in the hospital, he was theirs to do whatever they pleased with. Gargamuni had stolen Swamiji away from them.

Gargamuni got to the elevator. He had difficulty maneuvering the bed and in his haste bumped into the wall. He forgot what floor Swamiji was on. He only knew that he was protecting Swamiji, who wanted to be taken away.

When Gargamuni finally reached Prabhupāda's room, 607, an intern was there and spoke angrily. "I don't care," Gargamuni said. "He doesn't want any more needles or tests. We want to leave." Brahmānanda arrived, calmed his younger brother, and helped Prabhupāda back into bed.

Prabhupāda said he wanted to leave. When the doctor came in, Prabhupāda sat up and spoke decisively. "Doctor, I am all right. I can go." And he shook the doctor's hand to show him he was hale and hearty. The doctor chuckled. He said that although Swamiji was getting stronger, he would have to stay a few more days. He was by no means out of danger yet. He required careful medical surveillance. They needed to run another electroencephalogram.

Śrīla Prabhupāda still had pains around his heart, but he told the doctor his boys had a place for him to rest by the seaside. This was very good, the doctor said, but he couldn't let his patient go just yet.

But Prabhupāda had made up his mind. Brahmānanda and Gargamuni arranged for a rented car. They gathered Prabhupāda's things and helped him dress. As they escorted him out of his room and the hospital staff saw that the boys were actually taking the old man away, some of the doctors and nurses tried to stop them. Brahmānanda told them not to worry: Swamiji was very dear to them, and they would take good care of him. He would get regular massages and plenty of rest, and they would get him whatever medicines the doctors prescribed. After a rest by the seaside he could come back for a checkup.

Brahmānanda: Then the doctors became fed up. They threatened us: "This man is going to die." They really scared us. They said, "This man is going to die, and it is going to be your fault." Even as we left they said, "This man is condemned to death." It was horrible.

At ten A.M. on June 8 they left the hospital. Prabhupāda wanted to stop briefly at the temple at 26 Second Avenue before going to the house in Long Branch. Entering the storefront, walking shakily, he came before the portraits of his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and his spiritual master's father, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. For the first time, Prabhupāda's disciples saw him offer fully prostrated obeisances. As he prostrated himself before his Guru Mahārāja, his disciples also paid obeisances and felt their devotion increase.

When Prabhupāda arrived at his cottage in Long Branch at one o'clock, he had Kīrtanānanda immediately begin cooking lunch. It would be Prabhupāda's first regular hot meal—rice, dāl, capātī, sabji—since his stroke nine days ago.

Prabhupāda went to bed but soon got up and came into the kitchen, asking, "Is it ready?" Kīrtanānanda made a few excuses and said he would hurry. After a few minutes, Prabhupāda returned. He seemed furious: "Why are you taking so long?" Kīrtanānanda moved as quickly as he could, but he couldn't make the dāl boil any faster. "Whatever you have," Prabhupāda said, "let me eat it. I don't care if it is raw." Kīrtanānanda served lunch, and Prabhupāda ate with the relish of a person in good health. Kīrtanānanda telephoned his pal Hayagrīva in San Francisco: "He ate like anything. It was wonderful to see."

The small one-story cottage was situated in a quiet suburb a short walk from the beach. The back yard was enclosed by trees and shrubs, and the neighborhood bloomed with fragrant roses.

But the weather was often blustery and the sky gray. Prabhupāda spoke of returning to India to recuperate. In Delhi, Sri Krishna Pandit had refused Prabhupāda's urgent request for Āyur Vedic

medicine: "You are in such a long place—if the medicine gives some bad reaction, then how to arrange for the good?" Prabhupāda had written back asking if an Āyur Vedic physician could be sent to America, but the proposal seemed impractical. It would be better for Prabhupāda to go to India. He received Swami Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's reply that since no Āyur Vedic doctor would go to America, Swamiji should come and be treated in Calcutta. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja also enclosed a letter to Prabhupāda's secretary, Rāya Rāma: "There is no need for anxiety. Always utter hari nama (Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare) near his ears. God will do for the best."

Śrīla Prabhupāda talked of going to India not only for his health; he told Kīrtanānanda and Gaurasundara he wanted to start in Vṛndāvana an "American House," a place where his American disciples could learn Vedic culture to help them preach all over the world. He also said he wanted to make some of his disciples—Kīrtanānanda, Brahmānanda, Hayagrīva—into sannyāsīs and he would do that also in India. His real work, however, was in America—if he could just regain his health. But where was the sunshine?

Govinda dāsī had cherished the desire to serve Swamiji personally ever since she had first met him in San Francisco. She saw that he was selfless, and his love for his disciples was unlike anything she had ever known before. She didn't mention her cherished desire to anyone, even to Gaurasundara. But now Kṛṣṇa was fulfilling her desire by allowing her and Gaurasundara to come to New Jersey to serve Swamiji. To the devotees in New York, having a married couple take care of Swamiji seemed the best arrangement, and Govinda dāsī and Gaurasundara had been available. These were external reasons, but Govinda dāsī understood that Kṛṣṇa was fulfilling her desire.

Serving Swamiji, Govinda dāsī felt completely satisfied. Now that she was actually dedicating herself to Swamiji as she had always wanted, nothing else was on her mind. Despite the problems of working with Kīrtanānanda—who seemed to think she was less intelligent because she was a woman and who sometimes corrected her—she was happy.

Govinda dāsī: Swamiji would sit on a little couch with a table before him, and Gaurasundara and Kīrtanānanda and I would sit on the floor, and we would all eat together, like a family. We would talk, and one time the subject was rice. Kīrtanānanda said, "White rice is for human beings, and brown rice is for animals." So I said, "I must be an animal, then, because I really like brown rice better." And Swamiji just laughed and laughed and laughed. He thought it was so funny. I guess it did sound pretty simple. But he laughed and laughed.

Prabhupāda was sitting in the back yard when Govinda dāsī saw a large slug climbing on a wall. She showed it to Prabhupāda. "Chant to the poor thing," he said, and she began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Govinda dāsī would take walks daily and, with the neighbors' permission, pick dozens of roses. On returning she would arrange them in vases and place them all around in Prabhupāda's room. One time when Prabhupāda heard her loudly singing Hare Kṛṣṇa as she returned from the neighborhood, he remarked to Gaurasundara, "She is very simplehearted."

Govinda dāśī: Swamiji talked about Kṛṣṇa in such a way that Kṛṣṇa was present in the room. This was so striking to me. He would talk about Kṛṣṇa's activities—about how Kṛṣṇa is doing this and that and how Kṛṣṇa is so wonderful and mother Yaśodā is thinking like this. He would talk, and he would get into such a beautiful state that the whole room would glow golden. I would feel as if I were being transported to some other realm, and it was all very new to me. I didn't have any great understanding of what was going on, but it was all very new to me, and it was an actual transcendental experience of feeling Kṛṣṇa's presence and almost glimpsing within the heart the memory of His pastimes.

Swamiji playing karatālas, Swamiji walking on the beach, Swamiji sitting in his room or taking a nap—everything he did seemed wonderful to Govinda dāśī. And everything he did or said seemed to endear him more and more to her.

Devotees would travel—no more than two at a time and only once a week—from Manhattan to Long Branch to visit Swamiji. Mostly they would see him sitting on his bed, but sometimes they would walk with him on the beach. The morning sunshine, he said, would help him. But the gray skies persisted.

As Prabhupāda sat one morning with Kīrtanānanda, Gaurasundara, Satsvarūpa, Govinda dāśī, and Jadurāṇī on a blanket spread on the sand, he noticed some boys with surfboards trying to ride the waves. "They think this is bliss, playing in the water," he said. "Actually there is some bliss there, but it is not ānanda, the bliss of the spiritual world. On Kṛṣṇaloka everything is conscious. The water is conscious, the land is conscious. And everything is blissful. Here that is not so." Devotees looked with him at the surfers bobbing in the sea. "Yes," Kīrtanānanda said, "and also here it is dangerous. At any moment one of the surfboards could jump up and hit them on the head."

"Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "this is not real ānanda. Prahāda Mahārāja has said that this material world is crushing him like a grinding wheel of repeated birth and death. He says that in material life he experiences either separation from what is beloved to him or meeting up with an obstacle he doesn't want. And in order to combat this condition, the remedy he takes is even worse than the disease. LSD is like that, a remedy worse than the disease."

Except that Prabhupāda's face looked thin, his appearance was the same as before his illness. He sat among them, wrapped in a gray wool cādar. They knew he must be very careful about how much he did. They would never forget, as they had forgotten before, that he was seventy-two years old. Perhaps never again would they be able to enjoy spending as much time with him as before. Certainly for now his intimate association had become a rare treasure.

Sitting inches away from Prabhupāda on the beach blanket, Satsvarūpa asked a question on behalf of the devotees in New York. "Swamiji, is wearing of leather shoes permissible?"

"No."

"What if someone has given us some leather shoes?"

"Leather means violence," Prabhupāda said. He pointed to Satsvarūpa's shoes of inexpensive man-made material. "Your country is very nice. By your technology you can get these shoes easily without wearing leather." For Satsvarūpa and the others the question was answered for a lifetime; and the time and place became a reference, like a chapter and verse number in the scriptures.

As Jadurāṇī helped Govinda dāśī gather flowers, the two girls talked together. Both had heard the men say that women were less intelligent, and they felt discouraged. Later Govinda dāśī told Prabhupāda about the problem. "Is it true," she asked, "that because we are women we won't make advancement as quickly as the brahmācārīs?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda answered. "If you think of yourselves as women, how will you make any advancement? You must see yourself as spirit soul, eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa."

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave Jadurāṇī a photograph of himself to paint from. Taken in India, before he had come to America, it showed him grave and standing very straight against a blank white wall. "Oh, Swamiji," Jadurāṇī remarked, "you look so unhappy here."

"Noooo," he said thoughtfully, stretching out the sound of the word. "No. That is not unhappy. That was a moment of ecstasy."

Prabhupāda drew Jadurāṇī's attention to a picture on his wall. Mother Yaśodā was rebuking her son, Kṛṣṇa, for stealing butter, while in the distance two of Kṛṣṇa's friends were hiding behind a tree, laughing. Prabhupāda asked, "Do you think that Kṛṣṇa would let Himself get caught and His friends get away?" She looked at the picture again. By the light of Swamiji's words she could see that Kṛṣṇa's friends would also soon be caught. She suddenly felt she was there in Vṛndāvana. They both laughed.

After staying with Prabhupāda for two days, Satsvarūpa and Jadurāṇī, the devotees visiting from New York, had to return to their duties. Although Prabhupāda had been resting, he awoke just as they were about to depart, so they came into his room. In a faint voice Prabhupāda spoke a few words from his bed. Then he sat up and Gaurasundara began to massage him. People who think God is dead are crazy, Prabhupāda said. Although no one had introduced the subject, for Prabhupāda, preaching about Kṛṣṇa was always apropos. His voice picked up volume as he denounced the atheists: "Just like if I go to the doctor. If he checks my heart and it is beating well and if he checks my blood pressure and it is going on and my breathing is there, and after observing all these symptoms of life if I ask him, 'So, doctor, what is the condition?' if the doctor says, 'My dear sir, you are dead!—is this not a crazy diagnosis?'"

Gaurasundara, still massaging, glanced wide-eyed at the others. Prabhupāda was now speaking in a loud, forceful voice, as if addressing a large audience instead of a few visitors in his sickroom. "Similarly, just see the signs of life in this universe! The sun is rising just on time, the planets are all moving in their orbits, there are so many signs of life. And the universe is God's body. And yet they are seeing all these symptoms and declaring God is dead? Is it not foolishness? They are rascals! I challenge them. Simply rascals!"

A few soft words had become half an hour of strong, emphatic speech meant to move the audience against all kinds of atheistic theorists. Although Kīrtanānanda had at first cautioned Swamiji, reminding him about his health, Swamiji had dismissed the caution by saying, "That's all right." But now he was exhausted and had to lie back down.

The devotees had just seen Swamiji immediately use up whatever energy he had gained from his afternoon's rest. Although they admired how he was using everything for Kṛṣṇa, they were also fearful. But they were helpless to restrain him. They were even implicated—they wanted to hear him.

When Satsvarūpa and Jadurāṇī returned to New York, Brahmānanda had them tell the others about Swamiji. Satsvarūpa told how he had slept in the room with Swamiji and had felt that this nearness to Swamiji was very auspicious. He had felt light and peaceful and close to Kṛṣṇa all night. Satsvarūpa and Jadurāṇī told about sitting on the beach with Swamiji and his talking about everything's being conscious in Kṛṣṇaloka. And they told how Swamiji had sat up in bed and had used his energy preaching, showing them that they should also use everything in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Brahmānanda beamed at the other devotees. "Just look! By your talking about Swamiji, everyone is feeling blissful."

Prabhupāda stayed in Long Branch for three weeks. But when Sri Krishna Pandit wrote saying that he couldn't arrange for an Āyur Vedic doctor to come to America, Prabhupāda began to think more seriously about going back to India. In India he could get sunshine and Āyur Vedic treatment. But his plans would vary from one day to another—San Francisco, Montreal, India, New York. He told Kīrtanānanda to inform the devotees in San Francisco that if they held a Ratha-yātrā festival he would come.

At the end of June, he returned to 26 Second Avenue and to the hospital for a checkup. The doctor was surprised at Swamiji's recovery and had no objection to his flying to San Francisco. So in search of sunny skies, and eager to guide his followers in performing the first Ratha-yātrā, Prabhupāda had airline tickets booked for himself and Kīrtanānanda to San Francisco, New Jagannātha Purī.

SPL 26: Swamiji's Departure

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Swamiji's Departure

At the San Francisco airport Prabhupāda smiled but said little as the devotees greeted him with flowers and kīrtana. It was different this time. He walked straight ahead, with the aid of a cane.

Jayānanda was waiting with his station wagon to drive Prabhupāda to the private house they had rented north of the city, at Stinson Beach. But first, Prabhupāda said, he wanted to visit the San Francisco Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple. Jayānanda drove to 518 Frederick Street. Prabhupāda got out of the car and entered the small storefront, which was filled with waiting devotees and guests. He bowed

before the smiling Jagannātha deities and, without speaking a word, left the room, returned to the car, and departed for Stinson Beach.

The ride up through the seaside cliffs was so winding and climbing that Prabhupāda became nauseated. And even lying down in the back seat and having Jayānanda drive slower didn't help much. Kīrtanānanda realized that it would be too difficult for Prabhupāda to visit the San Francisco temple from Stinson Beach. But maybe that would be just as well; he could spend all of his time recuperating.

It was a modern single-story six-room house with a Japanese roof. A sign out front read *Paradisio*. Śrīla Prabhupāda noticed in the front yard, amidst fashionable lawn furniture, a statue of Lord Buddha—a garden ornament. When Prabhupāda entered the house, he found Mukunda and his wife, Jānakī, waiting for him. They bowed down, and Jānakī wept in happiness. Prabhupāda smiled but kept walking, slowly and silently, through the house. The large living room overlooking the Pacific Ocean was decorated with some of Jadurāṇī's paintings of Lord Viṣṇu, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and Lord Caitanya, as well as with Indian prints of Jagannātha Purī. Prabhupāda's bedroom, also facing the ocean, had sliding windows. On the wall was a portrait of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and a painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda smiled and said the paintings were very nice.

The devotees agreed that only Kīrtanānanda and Upendra would stay and serve Swamiji. They wanted Swamiji's stay to be peaceful, so that his health could improve.

That night Śrīla Prabhupāda felt pain in his heart and couldn't sleep. And he didn't rise early for translating. At five A.M. Kīrtanānanda came in and opened the window slightly so that Prabhupāda could receive the soft ocean breeze. Prabhupāda sat up in his bed chanting his japa and gazing at the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. A mountain range to the east blocked the morning sun.

Ever since Prabhupāda's stroke, Kīrtanānanda had been regularly massaging Prabhupāda morning and evening. Kīrtanānanda would rub Prabhupāda's head vigorously and then sit behind him and massage his back; next he would massage Prabhupāda's chest, his arms, and his legs, the complete massage lasting sometimes more than an hour. Since leaving the hospital, Prabhupāda had also been taking daily morning walks, even while on the Lower East Side. And this morning he went down for a walk on the beach, accompanied by Kīrtanānanda and Upendra.

As Prabhupāda walked on the beach, he pointed his cane towards some bubbles in the sand. "Just see," he said. "There are living entities everywhere. There is no place without living entities. And yet they say there is no life on the moon!" The beach was rocky, and there were cliffs where the waves crashed powerfully like thunder. "You hear this sound?" Śrīla Prabhupāda asked. "This is an echo of the gopīs' heartbeats when they are feeling separation from Kṛṣṇa."

He walked for an hour, until his two young servants were both tired. "Do I tire you walking?" he laughed. "This walking and massaging are saving my life from day to day." Then he continued walking.

By eleven o'clock the sun finally appeared over the mountains and through the clouds. Śrīla Prabhupāda, his head wrapped with a towel, sat in a folding chair on the beach, taking in the sunshine. He kept saying he needed more sun. After lunch the sky was again overcast.

In the evening Prabhupāda called Kīrtanānanda and Upendra into the large living room and led them in a subdued kīrtana, singing Hare Kṛṣṇa and Govinda Jaya Jaya. He stood and led them in a large circle around the room. He would stop before the picture of Kṛṣṇa, bow slightly with folded palms, turn around, and then continue in the circle.

On July 8, after Prabhupāda had been at Paradisio for two days, Śyāmasundara and Mukunda drove up from San Francisco. The next day was to be Ratha-yātrā, and Śyāmasundara and Mukunda, the first devotees to visit Prabhupāda since his arrival at Stinson Beach, told Prabhupāda all about the festival preparations. Of course, the whole festival had been Prabhupāda's idea, but the devotees in San Francisco were trying to do exactly as he had asked.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had first gotten the idea for the festival while looking out the window of his room above Frederick Street. Noticing flatbed trucks passing below, he thought of putting Jagannātha deities on the back of such a truck and conducting an American-style Ratha-yātrā festival. He had even sketched a truck with a four-pillared canopy on the back and decorated with flags, bells, and flower garlands. And he had called in Śyāmasundara: "Make me this cart for Ratha-yātrā." Now, ready and sitting outside the temple on Frederick Street, was the cart—a yellow Hertz rental truck, compliments of the Diggers and complete with five-foot columns and a pyramidal cloth canopy.

Sitting with Prabhupāda on the beach, Mukunda told how all the devotees were working with great enthusiasm and how the hippies in Haight-Ashbury were talking about the Jagannātha parade that would take place the next day. The devotees had tried to route the parade through Golden Gate Park, but the police department would only give permission for them to go south down Frederick Street to the sea. Mukunda said the devotees planned to have Jagannātha under the canopy, facing the right side of the truck, Subhadrā facing the rear, and Balarāma facing the left side; he wanted to know if that was all right. Actually, Prabhupāda said, the deities should ride in separate carts, pulled with ropes by the crowd through the streets; maybe that could happen in future years.

"Do it nicely," he cautioned them. "And don't hurry it up." The devotees should drive the truck slowly through the streets down to the beach, and there should be constant kīrtana.

Mukunda and Śyāmasundara glorified Jayānanda: he drove all around San Francisco getting donations of fruits and flowers, found people to help decorate the cart, installed the sound system on the truck, and distributed posters in the stores. He was tireless, and his enthusiasm was inspiring everyone else to take part. The women had been cooking capātīs all day, so there should be thousands to give away to the crowd. The devotees had prepared hundreds of Hare Kṛṣṇa Ratha-yātrā festival balloons to release on the streets as the parade began.

When the devotees asked what else they should do, Prabhupāda said that this was all—a procession, prasādam distribution, kīrtana. The people should get a chance to see Lord Jagannātha and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. There should be chanting and dancing in front of the cart throughout the

procession. "But do everything nicely," Prabhupāda said. "Do it as well as you can, and Lord Jagannātha will be satisfied."

The next day, in the quiet afternoon, Prabhupāda was sitting in the living room, chanting on his beads. Upendra was with him, and Kīrtanānanda was in the kitchen cooking a feast. Suddenly Prabhupāda heard the familiar ringing of cymbals, and he became very happy, his eyes widening. Looking outside he saw the Ratha-yātrā truck, with Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Balarāma and dozens of devotees and hippies eager to see him. He went out to greet them and had them bring the deities inside and set them on top of the upright piano. Devotees and guests followed, filling the large living room. Smiling, Prabhupāda embraced some of the men while others made obeisances at his feet. Some devotees helped Kīrtanānanda in the kitchen get ready to distribute the large feast he had prepared. Others reported on the success of the Ratha-yātrā festival.

It was great! It was wonderful! It was a beautiful day, they said. And Prabhupāda listened, moved by his disciples' description of the celebration. Many hippies had joined the large procession. Mukunda, Haridāsa, Hayagrīva, and some of the women had been on the cart, and the instruments, including Yamunā's playing on the harmonium, had all been amplified. Everyone in the streets had liked it. The police motor escorts had tried to hurry the devotees, but so many people had crowded in front that the parade had been obliged to go slowly, just as Swamiji had asked. Subala had danced wildly the whole time, and Jayānanda had been jumping up and down, playing karatālas. From the truck some of the women had handed out cut oranges, apples, and bananas, and others had thrown flowers. The crowds had loved it.

Śyāmasundara told how they had been going up a steep hill—Śyāmasundara had been driving, with his dog Ralph beside him on the front seat—when the truck had stalled. He had tried to start the engine but couldn't. Then the brakes wouldn't hold. The truck began rolling backward downhill! Finally he had managed to stop. But when he had tried to go forward the engine had stalled and the truck had rolled backwards again! He would get it started, the truck would go forward, then stall, then roll backwards. Everyone had been in anxiety. At last the truck had started forward, and the procession had continued all the way to the beach.

Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled. It was a pastime of Lord Jagannātha's, he said. The same thing had happened when Lord Caitanya had attended Ratha-yātrā in Jagannātha Purī. Then also the cart had gotten stuck, and no one had been able to move it. The king of Orissa had brought forward the most powerful wrestlers to push the cart and pull on the ropes. But it wouldn't go. Even the elephants couldn't move it. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu had then put His head against the cart and pushed, and only then did the cart begin to move. Now Ratha-yātrā had come to the West, and with it this pastime of Lord Jagannātha's.

Prabhupāda noticed some devotees were missing. "Where are Yamunā and Jānakī?" he asked. The devotees told him that some hippies had handed out candy spiked with LSD and that a few of the devotees had unwittingly accepted it and were just now recovering.

Subala related how, after the festival, they had traveled out on the freeway in their flower-bedecked, canopy-covered truck carrying thirty devotees and the deities of Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and

Balarāma. They had driven up through the mountains in what must have been one of the most unusual vehicles ever seen.

After all the visitors departed, the deities remained in the house with Prabhupāda and his servants. Prabhupāda felt satisfied that his disciples had successfully held a Ratha-yātrā festival. Although untrained, they were sincere. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura would have been pleased to see the first American Ratha-yātrā.

The whole world was in anxiety, Prabhupāda explained to the devotees gathered in his room that evening. Only in the spiritual world was there freedom from anxiety. Becoming free from all anxiety and returning to the spiritual world was the purpose of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And festivals like Ratha-yātrā made people Kṛṣṇa conscious. Prabhupāda had many, many ideas for festivals. If he had the money and the manpower, he said, he could have a festival every day. There was no limit to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This Ratha-yātrā festival was another sign of the good reception for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West.

He wrote Brahmānanda in New York:

The house is situated in an exceptionally nice spot and the house itself is aristocratic. So there is nothing to complain about the house and place. The only difficulty is that I cannot go to the temple on account of the zigzag course of the road and crossing the mountains. Anyway, the devotees are coming here, and the Ratha-yatra festival was just performed with great pomp. More than five hundred people followed the procession to the beach, and there were about two dozen cars. They distributed thousands of chapaties, and at last Sri Jagannatha, Subhadra and Baladeva kindly came here in our house and will stay here for one week and then return.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda still talked of going to India. He had virtually made up his mind to go; the question now was when, and whether by the western route, via Japan, or the eastern route, via New York. The gray skies and unseasonably cool temperatures of Stinson Beach were a disappointment. His health was still poor. He even spoke of dying. It didn't matter whether he died in America or in Vṛndāvana, he said. If a Vaiṣṇava dies in Vṛndāvana, the land where Kṛṣṇa appeared, he is assured of joining Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world. Yet when Lord Caitanya had traveled outside Vṛndāvana, His devotee Advaita had assured Him, "Wherever You are is Vṛndāvana." To be always absorbed in thinking of Kṛṣṇa was also Vṛndāvana. So if he were to pass away while preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness—anywhere in the world—certainly he would still attain to the eternal Vṛndāvana in the spiritual sky.

Nevertheless, Prabhupāda wanted to go to Vṛndāvana. It was the best place—to die or to recuperate. Besides, he had a plan for bringing his disciples to Vṛndāvana for training. He expressed this plan in a letter to Sumati Morarji, the owner of the Scindia Steamship Company.

I am thinking of going back to India as soon as I get sufficient strength. I am now considerably old; I will be 72 years next September. But the work which I have begun in the western world is not yet finished, and I require to train some of the American boys to preach this cult all over the western

world. So if I return to India I will have to take with me some of the boys for training. They are all nice boys to take up the training. So your cooperation in this connection is greatly needed. You have already allowed my men from India free passage; similarly if you allow free passage for some of my American disciples they can come to India and taking training from me at Vrindaban. The idea is that in this old age I do not know when death will overcome me. And I wish to die in the last days of my life at Vrindaban.

Prabhupāda told Kīrtanānanda, Hayagrīva, and others that he would take them with him and show them the sacred places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. With the New York temple's building fund, he would start his American House in Vṛndāvana.

I may come to Montreal, perform the opening ceremony of installation of Radha-Krishna Vighraha. Then I may go back to India for six months, as there is a program for construction of an American house for training preachers at Vrindaban. Vrindaban is the only solitary transcendental abode within this universe where Krishna consciousness automatically reveals. Therefore I have a great hope to train some of my disciples for preaching work, even in my absence. I am now old man, and attacked with serious disease; I may be overcome by death at any moment. Therefore I wish to leave some trained preachers so that they can do the work of Krishna consciousness in the Western world. That is my ambition. I hope you all pray to Krishna so that I may be able to execute my duty properly.

When Govinda dāśī wrote Prabhupāda that she was anxious to serve him again as she had in New Jersey, he replied that he would be going to India to try to construct an American House "where you will be invited to come and live for all the days. Both your husband and yourself, you will find a very peaceful atmosphere in Vrindaban to worship Krishna."

Waiting for sufficient strength to travel, Prabhupāda continued his daily routine at Stinson Beach. One or two at a time, devotees would visit him from San Francisco. His morning walks on the beach, his sitting to take in the sunshine whenever it peeked through the clouds, and his evenings of kīrtana or reading in the living room remained undisturbed and peaceful.

Upendra: He would sit in his chair on the beach side of the house. He liked to see us go in the water and play. At first I felt a bit strange going in the water and knowing that Swamiji was watching me. But I went in and began washing my body. When I looked back at Swamiji he was motioning from his chair, throwing his arms up like he was splashing in the water. He kept doing it until finally I understood that he wanted me to splash and play in the water. As I began to splash and jump around in the water, he nodded his head and smiled broadly.

Mukunda: I went on a walk on the beach with Swamiji, and when he sat down, I sat down opposite him. Then he asked me, "What is your definition of Kṛṣṇa?" I said, "Kṛṣṇa is God. He is the Supreme Being. Our duty is to worship and serve Him." Swamiji seemed fairly satisfied, and then he said, "You must chant sixty-four rounds per day on your beads." I was shocked at this and could not answer. I did not know if there was any need to answer. I just kept looking at Swamiji, and he looked at me. After some time he said, "Or at least you can chant thirty-two rounds a day." Still silence. I considered it to be very difficult to chant even sixteen rounds. I was wondering how I could possibly chant thirty-two rounds. After some time, Swamiji said, "At the very least you must

chant sixteen rounds every day." I said, "Yes, Swamiji." I knew that I could at least try to handle that much.

Prabhupāda told Kīrtanānanda that he wanted to play the piano. (The Jagannātha deities, who had sat atop the piano for a week, were now back in San Francisco at the temple.) But when Kīrtanānanda and Upendra moved the piano away from the wall, they heard the thud of a falling object. "What is that?" Prabhupāda asked. Kīrtanānanda reached behind the piano and produced a framed canvas wrapped in a madras. He uncovered it and revealed a painting of Lord Nṛsimhadeva. "Why is this being hidden behind the piano?" Prabhupāda asked. Jānakī happened to be visiting at the time, and she confessed. While she had been arranging the house for Prabhupāda's arrival, someone had sent the painting out to the house. She had found it and hidden it. It was ghastly, she explained. Lord Nṛsimha was tearing open Hiranyakaśipu's abdomen, and there was blood everywhere.

Patiently Prabhupāda explained that although materialistic people feel sorry for Hiranyakaśipu, devotees become ecstatic when they see Nṛsimhadeva tearing him apart. Hiranyakaśipu, he said, had terrorized the whole universe and had usurped the throne of Indra, the king of heaven. Hiranyakaśipu had even tortured his own five-year-old son, Prahlāda, a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. So there was nothing wrong in Lord Nṛsimha's pastime. In fact, Hiranyakaśipu, having been killed by the Lord, had been liberated.

After directing the devotees to hang the picture on the wall, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat down and played the piano. The devotees had seen Prabhupāda beautifully play the Indian harmonium—his left hand pumping the bellows, his right hand fingering the keyboard—but never a piano. They weren't aware he knew how. But he expertly played the melodies of Indian bhajanas. After about five minutes he stopped.

Some evenings Prabhupāda would speak or arrange debates, although Kīrtanānanda was constantly cautioning. When Prabhupāda wanted to speak, it was impossible for any of his disciples to stop him. Sometimes he would ask Kīrtanānanda to debate with one of the visiting devotees. One devotee would argue for the impersonalist's or atheist's position, and the other would argue for the Kṛṣṇa conscious position. Prabhupāda would judge. But no sooner would the argument begin than Prabhupāda would interrupt, take the position of the devotee, and defeat the atheistic or impersonalistic argument. The devotees loved it. Prabhupāda was unable to confine himself either to the role of a silent judge or to that of a recuperating patient.

"Why do we concentrate on the impersonalists?" Kīrtanānanda asked. "Why do we attack them so much? Why don't we concentrate our attack on the atheists?"

"You say that because you are an impersonalist," Prabhupāda answered angrily.

On another occasion, Prabhupāda explained that nondevotees who mislead the innocent public are demons and should be exposed. Kīrtanānanda objected. "If we call them demons, they'll never come around."

"But they are demons," Prabhupāda replied.

"But we can't call them demons, Swamiji."

"Yes, they are demons! Unless you understand this point, you will not make any advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

"Can demons become devotees?" Kīrtānanda asked.

"Oh, yes," Prabhupāda answered. "If they chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and render service, even demons become devotees."

Most of the devotees had to remain in San Francisco, hoping for a chance to visit Swamiji. From the few who knew firsthand, they heard about Swamiji's plans to leave for India, perhaps never to return. It was painful to hear. His going almost to death but then returning by Kṛṣṇa's grace and rejoining them in San Francisco, yet being unable to stay with them as before, and now his plans of going to India, maybe forever—these activities intensified their concern and love for him.

Devotees worried, speculating on whether they could carry on without Swamiji. One devotee suggested that perhaps one of Swamiji's Godbrothers should come to America and fill in for Swamiji and, if the worst happened, take over the leadership of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. When the suggestion reached Prabhupāda, he considered it without immediately replying.

Mukunda: I was sitting alone with Swamiji in his room, and he was very grave and silent. His eyes were closed. Then, suddenly, tears began flowing from his eyes. And he said in a choked voice, "My spiritual master was no ordinary spiritual master." Then he paused for some time, and wiping the tears from his cheeks, he said in an even more choked voice, "He saved me." At that point I began to understand the meaning of "spiritual master" and dropped all consideration of ever replacing Swamiji.

After two days Prabhupāda said he would not call any of his Godbrothers to come and take care of his disciples. He said, "If this person speaks just one word different from what I am speaking, there will be great confusion among you." Actually, he said, the idea was an insult to the spiritual master.

Prabhupāda said that he would initiate the new followers in San Francisco and asked that they come one at a time and stay overnight. Without performing any fire ceremonies, he simply talked with each new person, asking him to follow the four rules and chant sixteen rounds a day. When the follower promised, Prabhupāda initiated him, sitting on the bed while the disciple sat before him on the floor. Prabhupāda would chant quietly on the disciple's beads and then give him or her a spiritual name.

One day one of the new candidates for initiation came in very nervously and bowed down before Prabhupāda. The boy didn't get up. "You can get up now," Prabhupāda said. "So you want to be initiated?" The boy said yes and began chanting, not knowing what else to say. "I'll chant on your beads," Prabhupāda said. After chanting for ten minutes he returned them, saying, "Your name is Aniruddha."

"What does that mean?" the boy asked.

"He's the grandson of Kṛṣṇa. Do you have any questions?" Aniruddha couldn't think of anything—he had already forgotten his name—and Prabhupāda said he could go

Later, Prabhupāda called for Aniruddha, but Aniruddha didn't know that it was his name being called. "Aniruddha," Kīrtanānanda said and looked at him. "Swamiji is calling you."

Another boy who came out received the name Uddhava. The next day, as Prabhupāda was sitting in the yard, he called, "Kīrtanānanda, Upendra, Uddhava." He wanted to read them a verse he had encountered while studying Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Kīrtanānanda and Upendra came and sat at Prabhupāda's feet. "Oh, where is Uddhava?" Prabhupāda asked. Upendra told him that Uddhava had gone up to the hills to look at the cows and chant to them. Upendra thought that Swamiji would be pleased to hear that his new disciple had climbed the hills just to chant to the cows. But Prabhupāda shook his head unhappily: "Restlessness!" He had wanted the new boy to hear the verse.

jayati jayati devo devakī-nandano 'sau

jayati jayati kṛṣṇo vṛṣṇi-vamśa-pradīpaḥ

jayati jayati megha-śyāmalaḥ komalāṅgo

jayati jayati pṛthvī-bhāra-nāśo mukundaḥ

Prabhupāda gave the translation: "All glories to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known as the son of Devakī. All glories to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the light of the Vṛṣṇi dynasty. All glories to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose bodily luster is like that of a new cloud and whose body is as soft as lotus flowers. All glories to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who walks on the planet earth to deliver the world from the scorn of demons and who can offer liberation to everyone." After repeating the Sanskrit and the translation, he told them they could return to their duties.

* * *

Prabhupāda told Kīrtanānanda he had definitely decided to go to India, via New York, as soon as possible. Kīrtanānanda packed Swamiji's things and drove Swamiji down to San Francisco to spend the night at the temple. They would leave the next morning.

The temple and even Prabhupāda's apartment were very hectic that night, with many devotees and guests wanting to see Prabhupāda and dozens of people wanting initiation. When Kīrtanānanda advised Prabhupāda not to exert himself by going down for the evening program, Prabhupāda insisted on at least going and sitting during the kīrtana.

When he entered the storefront, the devotees immediately stopped their kīrtana, dropping down to offer obeisances. There was a hush. He commanded a new reverence. This might be the last time they would see him. They watched him during the kīrtana as he played his karatālas, singing with them for the last time. The uninitiated wanted to accept him as their spiritual master—tonight, before it was too late.

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for the microphone. No one had expected him to speak. Kīrtanānanda, the only person in a position to restrain him, said nothing and sat before him like the others, submissive and expectant. Prabhupāda spoke quietly about his mission: under the order of his spiritual master he was bringing Lord Caitanya's movement to America, and Kṛṣṇa had kindly sent him so many sincere souls. "I have a few children in India from my family days," he said, "but you are my real children. Now I am going to India for a little while."

Everyone fixed his attention on Swamiji as he sat before them, leaning against the madras-covered wall, speaking softly. Suddenly the door opened, and Ravīndra-svarūpa unhappily entered. Everyone knew that Ravīndra-svarūpa wanted to leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He hadn't taken his initiation vows seriously. He wanted to move on. He didn't want a spiritual master any more. The other devotees had discouraged him, but he had persisted. They were incredulous. How could he do such a thing on the night before Swamiji's departure!

Ravīndra-svarūpa fell to the floor to offer obeisances. But he didn't rise up. Instead, he began crawling on his hands and knees towards Prabhupāda. Ravīndra usually had a cavalier manner, enhanced by a handsome face, long tousled hair, and a beard. But now he was wretched and sobbing and crazy. He crawled towards Prabhupāda, who sat but two steps off the floor on the simple redwood dais. Prabhupāda looked at him with compassion: "Come here, my boy." Ravīndra crawled up the steps and placed his bushy head on Prabhupāda's lap. Moved, the devotees watched as Prabhupāda stroked Ravīndra's head and the boy cried and cried.

"What's wrong, my son? You don't have to be so unhappy."

Ravīndra bawled out, "I want...", he sobbed, "aah... to... aah... reach God directly! Without anyone in between!"

Prabhupāda continued to pat and stroke the boy's head: "No, you continue to stay with us if possible. Don't be a crazy fellow." Ravīndra's weeping subsided, and Prabhupāda continued, speaking both to Ravīndra and to the emotion-struck group in the room. "I am an old man," he said. "I may die at any moment. But please, you all carry on this saṅkīrtana movement. You have to become humble and tolerant. As Lord Caitanya says, be as humble as a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. You must have enthusiasm and patience to push on this Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy."

Suddenly Ravīndra's tears were gone. He jumped up, dejectedly stood, hesitating for a moment, and then hurried out the door, banging it behind him.

Ravīndra-svarūpa's dramatic exit from Kṛṣṇa consciousness shocked the devotees. Prabhupāda sat still and continued speaking to them gravely, asking them to stick together and push on the

movement, for their own benefit and for others. Whatever they had learned, he said, they should repeat.

They realized, perhaps for the first time, that they were part of a preaching mission, a movement. They were together not just for good times and good vibrations; they had a loving obligation to Swamiji and Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda returned to his apartment, which soon became chaotic. It was late. Many people wanted initiation. Mukunda, Jayānanda, and other temple leaders tried to determine which candidates were sincere. They selected candidates, half a dozen at a time, and allowed them into Prabhupāda's room.

Prabhupāda sat behind his little desk, chanted on each person's beads, and returned them, giving each person a spiritual name. Kīrtanānanda requested him to stop; further initiations could be done through the mail. But Prabhupāda said he would continue initiating whoever was present.

Mukunda and Jayānanda set priorities. Some persons had been waiting months to be initiated and were obviously sincere. Others would have to be turned away.

John Carter: At the end of the lecture I was sure that I wanted to be initiated. And even though there was some talk of being initiated by mail, I knew I wanted to have that personal connection with my spiritual master and be personally initiated by him, personally accepted. I ran up to Mukunda and said, "How many are on the list? I would like to get on the list."

He said, "Well, Swamiji isn't really taking them in any particular order. We are just going to try to pick out the most sincere people."

"Please put my name on the list," I said. "I am really sincere, I really want to get initiated."

So he put me down and took the list up to Swamiji, and Swamiji began calling for people one by one. After the third person, when my name wasn't called, I became a little worried. Then after the fourth person, I was really sitting on edge. Then when they called the fifth person and it wasn't me, I was totally destroyed. I felt, "Oh, he's going to India, and then he's going back to Kṛṣṇa. I just lost my chance. This is it. There's no use in me living anymore."

I was trying to make it to the coat rack and get my coat and get out before anybody could see me crying. I hadn't started crying, but I could tell it was coming. A couple of people patted me on the back and said, "It's all right. He can write you a letter and tell you your name." All I could think was, "Yeah, the way he was talking tonight, it may never happen." I could barely stand up. I went outside and started walking across the parking lot towards Golden Gate Park. I was kind of heading towards the Golden Gate Bridge. I thought, "I'll just jump off." I hadn't been there long enough to understand that if you commit suicide you have to become a ghost. I just figured my life was useless.

I got about halfway across the parking lot when the idea struck me: "What if he decided to take one more and I was out here somewhere?" The thought filled me with so much hope that I turned

around and ran back to the temple. And just as I walked in the front of the temple Jānakī ran down and said, "He will take one more." And she grabbed somebody else and ran up the stairs. I felt my knees start to collapse and tears came jutting out of my eyes. Harṣarāṇī was standing there, and she grabbed me by the arm and said, "Come with me." She raced up the stairs, pulling me to the top, and burst into Swamiji's room without even knocking.

Swamiji looked up with amazement. She said, "Swamiji, you have to initiate this boy." I was just bawling, and Swamiji began to laugh. He said, "It's all right. Don't cry. Everything will be all right." He chanted on my beads and gave me the name Jīvānanda.

* * *

The next morning, Prabhupāda had to leave his affectionate followers. Several cars filled with devotees accompanied him to the San Francisco airport.

Nandarāṇī: Some were sincere, and some were crying because it was appropriate to cry when the spiritual master leaves. Actually, none of us really knew much about what the spiritual master was.

Jānakī mischievously stole the ticket and passport from Prabhupāda's hand. "Now you can't go," she said.

"That's all right," he smiled. "I already have my boarding ticket. I am Indian. They will let me into my own country."

Prabhupāda turned to his adoring followers gathered close around him at the boarding gate: "Actually I have only one desire, and whoever does this will please me very much. Now I have a temple in New York, in Montreal, and a temple in San Francisco. But I do not have any temple in Los Angeles." He told them to remain in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to please preach.

They watched as he turned and walked through the gate, his cane in one hand, boarding pass in the other.

* * *

In New York there was hardly time for sadness. Śrīla Prabhupāda telegraphed Sri Krishna Pandit that his arrival in Delhi would be on July 24 at 7:30 A.M. and that Sri Krishna Pandit should prepare Prabhupāda's quarters at the Chippiwada temple. In the telegram Prabhupāda mentioned his intention to consult a physician in Delhi and then go to Vṛndāvana. He was anxious to return to Vṛndāvana.

The day before his departure, Prabhupāda wrote to Sumati Morarji. In reply to his last letter she had agreed to provide free steamship passage to India for him, but not for his disciples. "As I had arranged for your passage to America," she had written, "I think it is my duty to see that you return back to India safely, more so due to your indifferent health." But she would not allow free passage for any disciples.

On July 20, Prabhupāda wrote:

I am feeling too much to return to Vrindabana to the lotus feet of Vrindabana Behary Lord Krishna; and therefore I have decided to return to India immediately. I would have liked to return via sea, as you have so kindly offered me passage in your letter, but in my precarious state of health that is not possible. So by the mercy of Krishna and through one friend here, somehow or other, I have received air passage, and I am expecting to leave here for New Delhi on Saturday next, reaching the Palam airport on the 24th instant at 7:30 a.m. From there I shall proceed to Vrindabana after a few days rest in Delhi.

I can understand that at present you cannot allow free passage to my disciples. But if you don't do so, at least in the near future, then my mission will be half finished or failure. I am just enclosing one letter of appreciation for one of my principal students (Bruce Scharf) from Professor Davis Herron, and another from Professor Roberts of New York University. I think these letters will convince you how much my movement of Krishna consciousness is taking ground in the western world. The holy name of Hare Krishna is now being chanted not only in this country but also in England, Holland, and Mexico, that I know of. It may be even more widespread. I have sent you one gramophone record which I hope you may have received by this time. You will enjoy to learn how Krishna's Holy Name is being appreciated by the Western World.

Acyutānanda told Prabhupāda he wanted to go to india to study in tensively, gather experiences, and become attached to Kṛṣṇa. He had heard Prabhupāda say that one could become more Kṛṣṇa conscious in two days in Vṛndāvana than in ten years in America. "Do you think I'll be able to go?" Acyutānanda asked.

"Rest assured," Prabhupāda told him, "we will meet again in Vraja."

Devotees had been asking Satsvarūpa to transfer his civil service job to Boston and open a Kṛṣṇa conscious center there. They had also asked Rūpānuga to do the same in Buffalo. Satsvarūpa and Rūpānuga approached Prabhupāda to find out what he wanted. He became very pleased. Subala was going to open a center in Santa Fe, he said, and Dayānanda was going to Los Angeles. "Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is like a big cannon," he told them. "Go and sound this cannon so everyone can hear it, and it will drive away māyā."

The devotees wanted to ask, "But what if you don't return?" They were fearful. What if Kṛṣṇa kept Swamiji in Vṛndāvana? What if Swamiji never returned? How could they survive against māyā? But Swamiji had already assured them that whatever Kṛṣṇa consciousness he had given them would be enough, even if he never returned.

Just thirty minutes before he had to leave for the airport, Prabhupāda sat in his room chanting on the beads of a girl who had asked to be initiated. Then, as he had done many times before, he left his apartment, went downstairs, crossed the courtyard, and entered the storefront.

Sitting on the old carpet, he spoke quietly and personally. "I may be going, but Guru Mahārāja and Bhaktivinoda are here." He looked toward the paintings of his spiritual master and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. "I have asked them to kindly take care of all of you, my spiritual children. The

grandfather always takes care of the children much better than the father. So do not fear. There is no question of separation. The sound vibration fixes us up together, even though the material body may not be there. What do we care for this material body? Just go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and we will be packed up together. You will be chanting here, and I will be chanting there, and this vibration will circulate around this planet."

Several devotees rode with Prabhupāda in the taxi—Brahmānanda in the front with the driver, Rāya Rāma and Kīrtanānanda in the back beside their spiritual master. "When Kīrtanānanda sees Vṛndāvana," Prabhupāda said, "he will not be able to understand how I could have left that place and come to this place. It is so nice. There are no motorcars there like here, rushing whoosh! whoosh! and smelling. Only there is Hare Kṛṣṇa. Everybody always chanting. Thousands and thousands of temples. I will show you, Kīrtanānanda. We will walk all about there, and I will show you."

Brahmānanda began to cry, and Prabhupāda patted him on the back. "I can understand that you are feeling separation," he said. "I am feeling for my Guru Mahārāja. I think this is what Kṛṣṇa desires. You may be coming there to me and be training up, and we will spread this movement all over the world. Rāya Rāma—you will go to England. Brahmānanda—you want to go to Japan or Russia? That's all right."

The devotees converged on the Air-India waiting room, near a crowded cocktail lounge. Wearing a sweater, his cādar folded neatly over one shoulder, Prabhupāda sat in a chair. His disciples sat as closely as possible around his feet. He held an umbrella, just as when he had first come alone to New York, almost two years ago. Although exhausted, he was smiling.

Prabhupāda noted a mural of Indian women carrying large jars on their heads, and he called the name of a young girl who had recently gone with her husband, Hamsadūta, to join the ISKCON center in Montreal. "Himāvatī, would you like to go to India and learn to carry this waterpot like the Indian women?"

"Yes, yes," she said. "I'll go."

"Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "some day we will all go."

Kīrtanānanda was carrying a portable battery-operated phonograph and two copies of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra record. "Kīrtanānanda," Prabhupāda asked, "why not play the record? They will enjoy." Kīrtanānanda played the record very softly, its sound catching the attention of people in the cocktail lounge. "Make it a little louder," Prabhupāda asked, and Kīrtanānanda increased the volume. Prabhupāda began nodding his head, keeping time.

Soon the devotees began humming along with the record, and then quietly singing, until gradually they were singing loudly. Kīrtanānanda, Brahmānanda, and other devotees began to cry.

Hamsadūta: I was sitting right next to Swamiji, and all the time I was thinking, "Oh, my spiritual master is going to India." And he said, "I want to die in Vṛndāvana." We all knew Swamiji was going, but now it was the last moment. I was also seeing that I hadn't done anything for my

spiritual master. "He doesn't even know who I am," I thought. "There's no relationship. I must do something. I must do something now. I must serve him in some way which will establish Someplace in his heart. Some thing." I was thinking, "What can I do?" I was crying, and he didn't even look at me. It was like I wasn't even there, just like a chair or something. He was just always looking around and everything, and I was trying to catch his eye: if all of a sudden he would say something.

The kīrtana was getting heavier and heavier, and so was the crying. And the people in the waiting room were just looking at Swamiji like he was someone very special. And in the middle of it all, Swamiji was completely relaxed, as if this were his place and this was just a normal thing to do.

When the record ended, Hamsadūta asked, "Swamiji, can I take a collection?" Prabhupāda nodded. Hamsadūta stood and made a little speech: "Our mission is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We have a temple in New York. We are always badly in need of money. Please help us." Borrowing a hat from a soldier, Hamsadūta went around taking a collection.

"Our traveling is very auspiciously beginning," Prabhupāda said. "We had a nice kīrtana, and we had a nice collection. It is all Kṛṣṇa's mercy."

Then it was time to board the plane. Prabhupāda embraced each of his men. They stood in a line, and one after another approached him and embraced him. He patted a few of the women on the head.

Rūpānuga: Swamiji was embracing the men: Kīrtanānanda, Brahmānanda, Gargamuni. I never expected that he would ask me to step forward. I didn't consider myself in the same category with the other devotees, so I was very much surprised when Swamiji motioned to me and spoke my name, "Rūpānuga." I got up and walked to Swamiji. It might have been ten feet, but it seemed like a long distance. I embraced him, and that embrace was the most memorable embrace of my life. Right away I noticed Śrīla Prabhupāda's strength. He was so strong it was like embracing a young man—a man my age. I was twenty-seven, and he seemed even stronger and younger than I. And he hugged me tightly, and I also embraced him very firmly. He was smaller than me in stature, so I instinctively buried my chin in the hollow of his left shoulder. While I was embracing him I felt very blissful, and I felt a light. I felt there was a light, something bright and pure, some kind of energy emanating from my face. I opened my eyes and I saw Kīrtanānanda watching. He was standing behind Swamiji, a few feet away, and I looked right into his eyes. And I was so happy and blissful that it reflected in him somehow. He broke into a big smile, smiled at me. And his eyes were very bright. It was as if some spiritual energy was actually emanating from me.

That airport scene was a very important part of my life. Because for me, a person who always had difficulty in loving another person, Swamiji's leaving forced out a lot of love from my heart I didn't even know was there. It's like becoming a spiritual person when you feel love really developing for the spiritual master. I was becoming a spiritual person. It was a tremendous outpouring of feelings of separation and grief at his departure, because we all knew he was our life and soul. And to a person, none of us were sure we would ever see him again.

Accompanied by Kīrtanānanda, whose head was shaven and who wore an incongruous black woolen suit, Prabhupāda walked slowly toward the gate. As he disappeared from view, the devotees ran for the observation deck to get a last look at his departing plane.

A gentle rain was washing the airfield as the devotees raced across the wet observation deck. There below were Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda, walking towards their plane. Abandoning decorum, the devotees began to shout. Prabhupāda turned and waved. He climbed the movable stairway, turning again at the top and raising his arms, and then entered the plane. The devotees chanted wildly while the boarding steps moved away, the door closed, and the plane began to turn. The devotees had pressed close to the rail, but they pulled back as the jet exhaust blasted them with heat. With a great roar the Air-India jet, lights blinking, taxied out to the runway. The devotees continued to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa until the plane left the ground, became a speck in the sky, and then disappeared.

SPL 27: India Revisited: Part 1

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

India Revisited: Part 1

The plane flew during the night and arrived in London by morning. Śrīla Prabhupāda had planned a stopover. He checked into an airport hotel, took his massage, and rested. In the afternoon he rose and bathed, and then he and Kīrtanānanda boarded their plane, bound for New Delhi via Moscow. While the plane was still on the ground, however, a crew member announced "a short delay due to health regulations." A passenger who had disembarked earlier that day was now sick, apparently with smallpox, so the plane would have to be thoroughly fumigated. Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda stayed in a room at the Excelsior Hotel for the night.

Early the next morning, July 24, seated in his hotel room, complete with air conditioning and television, neither of which he had used, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a letter to Brahmānanda in New York.

Accept my blessings. I am always thinking of your separation feelings. Please do your duty nicely and Krishna will help you in all respects. We were delayed here for 16 hours. Starting this morning at nine for Delhi. The attention of Mr. B. K. Nehru the Ambassador of India was drawn to me the other day. I have told him about my Permanent Visa and he has promised to help me when I come back. Please make an appointment with him informing that I wish to present him our set of Bhāgavatam and our other literatures. Then go to him and personally present the books etc. at Washington D.C. It may be that as soon as I feel some strength I shall be coming back. Up to now there was no disturbance about my health and I hope to reach Delhi this night. I shall write you again after reaching Vrindaban. Convey my ardent affection and blessings for all the boys and girls. I am very much hopeful of my movement. Please keep steady, follow all my instructions scrupulously, chant Hare Krishna and Krishna will give you all strength.

Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda flew to Moscow. There they walked around the terminal, observing what Prabhupāda called "propaganda pictures." After a one-hour stopover they reboarded and flew another eight hours, arriving in Delhi around midnight.

The wall of heat that greeted them felt good to Prabhupāda. He had come for this. Inside the airport terminal, overhead fans stirred the muggy air as Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda stood in slow-moving lines while uniformed clerks checked passports and customs forms, without Western-style computers or efficiency. Just beyond the areas for immigration and customs, people waiting for arriving passengers were waving, calling, and coming together with friends and family members.

After Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda claimed their luggage and cleared customs, they stood on the sidewalk outside the terminal. Although Prabhupāda had removed his sweater, Kīrtanānanda stood sweltering in his black wool suit. It was two A.M. All around, passengers were meeting loved ones, who embraced them—sometimes even garlanded them—and helped them into cars or taxis. But no one was there for Prabhupāda. It was certainly different from the recent tearful airport scenes, where Prabhupāda had been with his loved ones. Now, instead of being surrounded by loving disciples, Prabhupāda was besieged by taxi drivers and porters wanting to carry his luggage for a fee. In Hindi Prabhupāda asked one of the drivers to take them to Chippiwada, in Old Delhi. The driver put their luggage in the trunk, and Prabhupāda and his disciple climbed into the back seat.

The small Ambassador taxi drove through streets well known to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Nighttime traffic was light—an occasional taxi or motor ricksha. Mostly the streets were empty and quiet, the shops closed, an occasional person or cow sleeping outdoors.

Just a few years before, Prabhupāda had sold Back to Godhead magazines, solicited donations, and printed his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams here. In those days he had been alone, practically without money or residence. Yet he had been happy, completely dependent on Kṛṣṇa.

But India's leaders were rejecting Vedic culture and imitating the West. Although some Indians still professed to follow Vedic culture, mostly they were victims of hodgepodge teachers who didn't accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So he had felt obliged to leave—to go and transplant the Vedic culture in the West. He had held strictly to the vision of his predecessor spiritual masters, and he had been proven right: the West was a very good field for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

As the taxi drove through Old Delhi and approached Chawri Bazaar, Prabhupāda saw the printing and paper shops, now closed for the night. And the usual dense traffic of human-hauled carts was now absent, though some laborers were sleeping on their carts till the morning, when they would bathe in an outdoor well and begin another day's hauling. When Śrīla Prabhupāda had been overseeing the publishing of his first volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, he had daily walked these streets, buying paper, picking up proofs from the printer, returning with the corrected proofs. His First Canto had been a triumph.

Chawri Bazaar led to side streets that led to the narrow lanes of Chippiwada, where upright metal posts blocked autos and rickshas from entering. The driver stopped the taxi on an empty road and turned for his payment. Prabhupāda took from his billfold forty rupees (the same forty rupees he had carried with him on the boat to America in 1965). But the driver took the entire forty rupees and said he would keep it all as the just fare. Prabhupāda protested; the fare should not be even half that! Loudly they argued back and forth in Hindi. The driver had pocketed the money and would

give no change. Prabhupāda knew that to get a policeman at this hour would be very difficult. Finally, although this had been nothing less than a robbery, Prabhupāda let the man go. "He cheated me," Prabhupāda said. He and Kīrtanānanda took their luggage and walked the last block, up to the door of the Chippiwada Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple.

It was locked. As they pounded loudly, Prabhupāda called out for Sri Krishna Pandit until a man came to the door, recognized Prabhupāda, and let them in. The man showed them upstairs and unlocked the door to Prabhupāda's room. Prabhupāda turned on the light.

The room was bare and dusty, and the bulb hanging from the ceiling created stark light and shadows. On the floor was the three-foot-high cement dome indicating that directly below were the altar and the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. (The dome prevented anyone from accidentally committing the offense of walking directly above the Deities.) The closet was stacked with printed Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam pages, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam dust jackets, and form letters to prospective members of the League of Devotees. Everything was just as Prabhupāda had left it.

"This is the room where I compiled Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam," Śrīla Prabhupāda told Kīrtanānanda. "I slept here. And over here was my cooker and my typewriter. I would sleep and type and cook and type and sleep and type." Kīrtanānanda was shocked to think of Swamiji living here in such a poor, humble place. It wasn't even clean.

Although Kīrtanānanda was uncomfortable in his suit and wondered when he would be able to get rid of it, he managed to get a thin mattress for Swamiji. Two Āyur Vedic doctors came. They both agreed that the trouble was Swamiji's heart but that the danger was now past. They gave him medicines and advised him to keep to a regulated schedule of eating, resting, and working. Sri Krishna Pandit came by to sit and converse, and Prabhupāda told him of his success in America and of all the young devotees in New York and San Francisco. Prabhupāda played his record for Sri Krishna Pandit, and this drew a crowd of curious persons from other rooms in the temple.

In the afternoon Prabhupāda developed a cough. It didn't seem serious, and he said he wanted to travel the next day to Vṛndāvana. But by evening the cough had become persistent; he couldn't rest. Kīrtanānanda tried massages and the pills the Āyur Vedic doctors had prescribed, but nothing worked; Prabhupāda remained awake all night, and when Kīrtanānanda touched him in the morning he was feverish.

The doctors came again. Prabhupāda's temperature was over 104. They gave teas and Āyur Vedic powders while Kīrtanānanda looked on skeptically. Because Prabhupāda was having a lot of difficulty breathing when he lay down, Kīrtanānanda thought it might be pneumonia. So Kīrtanānanda gave him penicillin, of which he had brought a supply. In the afternoon an elderly Sikh doctor who practiced Western medicine came by and gave Prabhupāda a penicillin injection. Prabhupāda then fell asleep and rested quietly for the first time in twenty-four hours.

While Prabhupāda slept, Kīrtanānanda wrote a letter to his Godbrothers in New York.

I know you would like me to say straight out my opinion as to how He is, and that is not good. The outcome—as always, but now very apparently—is only in Krishna's hands. Please chant HARE

KRISHNA for that is the only thing that can save Him. That is what saved Him before, and that can do it again. I know that His task is not yet complete, and by Krishna's Mercy He can again be spared.

Kīrtanānanda also asked the New York devotees to call the devotees in San Francisco, Santa Fe, and Boston and have them continue chanting for Swamiji's health. He reminded them to strictly follow all of Swamiji's instructions.

The next day Śrīla Prabhupāda's fever was down to 100.6. He was still sick, but he talked again of going to Vṛndāvana. He dictated a letter to his bookselling agents in Delhi, Atmarama & Sons, asking them for an up-to-date account of their sales of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Old acquaintances came by and were disappointed to find Swamiji unable to accept their invitations. Prabhupāda asked that they invite Kīrtanānanda in his stead.

For several days Kīrtanānanda visited the homes of these pious Hindus. He played the record on his portable phonograph, chanting along and dancing with his arms upraised. Then he would give a short speech. His hosts accepted him as a sādhu, fascinated that an American had taken so seriously to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

* * *

On August 1, after six days in Delhi, Prabhupāda went to Vṛndāvana. Kīrtanānanda wrote back to New York:

My dear brothers and sisters,

Greetings in the NAME of KRISHNA from VRINDABAN.

Obviously Swamiji is much better—especially after reaching Vrindaban —His eyes now have a special glow. We left Delhi yesterday (31st) morning on the Taj Express, and in two hours were at Mathura. We rode “special third class” and it was quite satisfactory, not at all crowded like the usual third class. Anyway, we are now here and are in the process of settling down. Swamiji has two very nice rooms—quite cool—just off the porch where the Bhāgavatam is read. How appropriate! The only difficulty on His behalf is that these Indians all want to see Him—and they are very persistent, and I am not very successful in keeping them out...

Vrindaban, seen materially, is a very beautiful place. The country is very flat, and there are many trees, monkeys, peacocks, and of course temples. It is also very poor. Both the people and the temples are in a bad state of disrepair. But spiritually considered there are many great devotees here, and it is wonderful to walk down the streets and see teeloks all over the place, and people chanting on their beads. If I can develop a fraction of their devotion for Krishna, my life will be successful. It is also thrilling to hear the temple bells ringing so many times throughout the day. Last night I played our record for Lord Damodar here in the temple and then performed kirtan with some of the local devotees. It was very nice. But you will be surprised, I think, when I say that I prefer your kirtan in N.Y.

After Prabhupāda had been in Vṛndāvana only one day and his health had only slightly improved, he began planning his return to America. "I am always thinking of you," he wrote to the devotees, whom he addressed as his "dear students."

I cannot stop my western world activities and I have taken leave from you only for six months; and it may be that on or before I will come to you again. Kirtanananda says from my bodily feature that I am improving. I am also feeling like that.

In Delhi Prabhupāda had received a letter from Brahmānanda saying that the Macmillan Company was definitely interested in publishing the Bhagavad-gītā. In Vṛndāvana Prabhupāda wrote Brahmānanda to sign a contract at once on his behalf. Prabhupāda had been considering whether to print privately in Japan or India or to wait for Macmillan. He wasn't concerned with the prestige and financial advantages of publishing through Macmillan; his first concern was to print as quickly as possible.

I shall be satisfied with the commission and shall only be glad to see that the books are being read by hundreds and thousands of men. Whatever profit may be derived from it will be utilized for the development of an American House here.

Prabhupāda stayed in his old rooms at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. Still incapacitated, he was being massaged and cared for by Kīrtanānanda, who himself was listless and tired from the heat. But Prabhupāda continued to range from one active and ambitious vision for his youthful Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to another. He would think aloud about the volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam ready to be published— if Macmillan would take them and the boys could act on his behalf. There was so much to do. He wanted to return by October and oversee things personally.

Temperatures rose to more than 110 degrees, and Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda had to stay inside with the doors shut and the overhead fan on. Although Kīrtanānanda could barely perform his duties, Prabhupāda found the heat bracing and said that it was restoring his health. Then, after the first week, the monsoon rains began, and the heat broke.

On August 10 Kīrtanānanda wrote home again.

God is it a hot place! But at last the rains have started again and there is some relief—from the heat. You can believe me when I say it was hot. But now it is raining a great deal of the time, and that has made the weather quite comfortable for me—but unfortunately not for Swamiji. Also I have developed the inevitable case of dysentery, which has been persisting for about a week now.

Yesterday began the festival of Jhulan, in which Radha and Krishna come out and swing for about five days, so I made the rounds of about a half dozen temples here. Some of them are extremely beautiful inside, although most are small. Still I can say this with all truthfulness and sincerity that none are so transcendently beautiful and spiritual as 3720 Park Avenue Montreal—and I think even Swamiji would agree with me there.

Kīrtanānanda's letter gave heart to the devotees back home and confirmed their suspicion: it was not Hinduism, not India—it was Swamiji and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa that was sustaining their spiritual life.

As Prabhupāda's spiritual children wrote from the fledgling centers in half a dozen cities in North America, he would reply.

Vrindaban is an inspiration only but our real field work is all over the world. Even if I die you are my future hopes & you will do it. I am feeling very much for you all. Please let the ball roll on just as it is set.

Brahmānanda wrote from New York asking for an explanation of why Swamiji, a pure devotee, was suffering serious illness. Swamiji had explained that conditioned souls and even beginning devotees are “attacked by māyā.” But was Swamiji also being attacked by māyā? On August 14 Śrīla Prabhupāda replied.

Don't be afraid of my being attacked by maya. When there is fight between two belligerent parties, it is always expected that there will sometimes be reverses. Your country and the western world is mostly under the grip of Maya and the modes of nature in passion and ignorance, and my declaration of war against the maya is certainly a great battle. Maya saw me very successful within one year, so that I got so many sincere young followers like yourself and others, so it was a great defeat to the activities of maya: western country youngsters giving up illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling is certainly a great reverse in the activities of maya. Therefore she took advantage of my old age weakness and gave me a death dash. But Krishna saved me; therefore we should thank more Krishna than eulogize maya. So far as my present health is concerned I think I am improving: at least I am taking lunch better than in N.Y. So, as soon as I am a little fit to return to the field of battle I shall again be in your midst.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned an American House, a place where resident disciples could study Sanskrit and Vaiṣṇava literature in Vṛndāvana. When he had suffered his stroke he had said that Rāya Rāma should finish the translation of the Bhāgavatams. He had also requested Acyutānanda, Gaurasundara, and others to learn Sanskrit, Bengali, and Hindi so that if he did not recover they could carry on his work. And he hoped that some of his leading men, like Brahmānanda, Hayagrīva, and Rāya Rāma, would come to India, obtain property, and establish his American House. “Even if I am well,” he wrote on September 9, “it is not possible for me to look after the affairs of the American House.”

Prabhupāda decided to ask one of his Godbrothers, Swami B. H. Bon Maharaja, to accommodate some students from America at his Institute of Oriental Philosophy. Swami Bon Maharaja's institute was a provincial college of about three hundred students, located in Vṛndāvana and affiliated with Agra University. It was what is known in India as a “degree college,” an institution geared toward improving the economic condition of its graduates by making them eligible for better jobs.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda visited Swami Bon Maharaja at the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Swami Bon received them in a clean parlor furnished with chairs, couches, and a radio. Swami Bon, wearing leather slippers, shorts visible through his thin dhotī, and an ironed shirt with brass studs, appeared suave and sophisticated—an educated man with straight, neatly parted graying hair. Although a resident of Vṛndāvana, in the 1930s he had spent several years in England, where he had been received by members of the royal family and had lectured at a number of colleges. But he had aroused no lasting interest. When Prabhupāda had been struggling alone in New York in 1965, he had written to Swami Bon asking for help. But Swami Bon had not responded. Even now, as Prabhupāda told him of the work in America, Bon Maharaja didn't have much to say. But he was interested in the prospect of Americans coming to live and study at his institute; foreign students would enhance the prestige of the institute in the eyes of the government. He said the students could possibly be accommodated free of charge.

Encouraged by the meeting with Bon Maharaja, Prabhupāda wrote several letters to his disciples, inviting them to come and study Sanskrit.

If you want to learn Sanskrit, there is ample opportunity in this institute. We had some preliminary talks, and it is hopeful that Swami Bon can give us some land for our own building; but even so, arrangements can be made with the existing facilities so that there would be no difficulty for the students who come here to study Sanskrit and the Goswami literature... It is a good opportunity for our students, and I shall be very glad to learn how many of you desire to come.

* * *

On Janmāṣṭamī day, August 28, Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded the order of sannyāsa to Kīrtanānanda in a ceremony in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. Kīrtanānanda thus became Śrīla Prabhupāda's first disciple to become a sannyāsī: Kīrtanānanda Swami. During the initiation hundreds of visitors were present observing the birthday of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and many of them came by to congratulate the young sannyāsī. Someone said he looked like Lord Caitanya. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote,

He will be going back to the States very soon to begin preaching work with greater vigor and success. In the meantime, I shall try to utilize this "white sannyāsī" for recruiting some members in India.

Early in September, Acyutānanda arrived in Delhi. A Hindu lady gave him five rupees, and he took the train to Mathurā, where he got directions to the Keśavajī Gaudiya Math. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, a friend of Prabhupāda's, took Acyutānanda under his care and, after showing him the hall where Prabhupāda had taken sannyāsa in 1959, put him on a bus to Vṛndāvana with an old gentleman for an escort. Accompanied by this escort, Acyutānanda arrived by ricksha before the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple.

Acyutānanda walked into Prabhupāda's room and fell prostrate at his feet. "Oh," Prabhupāda said, "you are here." When Acyutānanda looked up he saw that Swamiji had a five-day beard and was wearing only one piece of cloth, wrapped around his waist from behind, crossed over his chest, and tied behind his neck. Prabhupāda smiled, apparently in good health.

Kīrtanānanda Swami also greeted Acyutānanda and showed him his new daṇḍa.

For Acyutānanda, the most wonderful thing about Swamiji in Vṛn dāvana was the simplicity of his life. Although in New York Swamiji had worn simple robes, he had always been regal, a guru. But here he lived very simply and humbly. Once when he sat down on the veranda outside his room to wash his hands, his body instantly became covered with flies. Kīrtanānanda and Acyutānanda were always being bothered by the flies—this was the rainy season—but Prabhupāda scarcely noticed them and sat quietly washing his hands.

Kīrtanānanda and Acyutānanda agreed that Swamiji wasn't just another Vṛndāvana bābājī. There was no one else like him. Certainly Gaurachand Goswami, proprietor of the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, wasn't like Swamiji. He wore thick glasses and could barely see, and when Kīrtanānanda and Acyutānanda went before the Deities in the temple, Gaurachand Goswami asked them loudly, "So how do you like 'em? Which one do you like the best?"

"I like them all," said Acyutānanda.

"I like that big one on the end there," said the priest, pointing in an offhand manner at the Deity of Kṛṣṇa. "It looks a bit like General Choudry." The Swami's boys exchanged looks—what kind of guys are these?—and went back to Swamiji for an explanation.

"They are caste gosvāmīs," Prabhupāda explained. The original gosvāmīs, such as Jiva Gosvāmī, who established the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, had engaged householders to worship the Deities. And these caste gosvāmīs were descendants of those first householder pūjārīs. Prabhupāda explained that the caste gosvāmīs were the proprietors of the temples and that they maintained the temples and ran the Deity worship as a business to support their families. Several years ago each of the Deities now on the altar had had His own temple, land, income, and priests. But for economy the gosvāmīs had sold the property, reduced the opulence of the worship, and amalgamated the Deities.

There were many other interesting characters: the old widow Sarajini, with bald head and śikhā and callused bare feet, who slept in a room by the gate of the temple and swept Swamiji's kitchen and washed his clothes; Pancudas Goswami, the temple proprietor's son, who always chewed pān and went around sleepy-eyed in a silk dhotī with a red-embroidered border; the dark old bābājī who came at night, who was constantly laughing, and who made sandalwood paste for Swamiji; the local herbal doctor, Vanamali Kaviraja, who presided, brightly smiling, from behind a desk in a tiny chamber filled from ceiling to floor with little bottles; and a famous paṇḍita who visited Swamiji and wore a gold linked tulasī necklace and diamond rings. All of these persons were devotees, residents of holy Vṛndāvana. But no one was like Swamiji.

Kīrtanānanda Swami even became disappointed that no one else in Vṛndāvana was like Swamiji. In the land where everyone was an Indian and everyone was a devotee, Swamiji was still unique. No one else was so simple, so grave, so able to penetrate through falsity, so attractive to the heart, or so absolutely attached to Kṛṣṇa. No one else could lead them.

If Kīrtanānanda Swami and Acyutānanda were doubtful about some of the residents of Vṛndāvana, some of the residents of Vṛndāvana were also doubtful of them. When a European hippie couple wandered into Vṛndāvana one day, Acyutānanda accompanied them to some of the temples. But at the Raṅganātha temple they were refused entry. Acyutānanda told Prabhupāda, who replied, "That's because you went with those fools." When Prabhupāda walked in the streets, people regularly nodded to him with respect, saying, "Daṇḍavat, Mahārāja." But they were cautious about accepting his American followers as Vaiṣṇavas.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda, accompanied by his two disciples, again visited Swami Bon. Riding to Swami Bon's institute by ricksha, Prabhupāda told Acyutānanda that Swami Bon had started the institute as an academy of Vaiṣṇava studies but had affiliated with Agra University because the institute had not been bringing in any money. Now Swami Bon had money, but the institute had become an ordinary school, devoid of spiritual value.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples sat in Swami Bon's parlor, Bon Maharaja made it clear that although he would not donate land for Prabhupāda's American House, Prabhupāda's students could come and study at his institution. Acyutānanda, he suggested, could be the first one.

Swami Bon then took them to the main building to visit a class in session. Instead of seeing paṇḍitas and brahmacārīs studying Sanskrit, as they had expected, Prabhupāda's disciples saw boys with thin mustaches and giggling girls. Prabhupāda lectured and then asked Kīrtanānanda to play the Hare Kṛṣṇa record. After a few minutes, Bon Maharaja told Kīrtanānanda to stop the record, but Kīrtanānanda, seeing Swamiji enjoying the record, let it play.

Acyutānanda: We walked around the place, and I thought, "This is just a mundane school. I don't want to go here. If I could learn Sanskrit and live at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, then I could have a nice time in India."

They continued their tour of the facilities, and after seeing the dormitory Prabhupāda doubted whether his American disciples could endure the austerity and the academic studies. It seemed that one of the two boys was always sick. First Kīrtanānanda Swami had gotten dysentery, then something had been wrong with Acyutānanda's stomach, then they had both been exhausted from the heat. "On the whole," Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Rūpānuga in New York, "the American boys who come here become first depressed, so I do not know how far our American House in Vrindaban will be successful." His boys were not particularly studious or austere. Besides, both Kīrtanānanda Swami and Acyutānanda had developed a definite dislike for the rector of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy. And Śrīla Prabhupāda obviously had reservations about the place. "You can go and study there," Prabhupāda told them, "but don't live there. Live at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple and go. You can get a bicycle and go there."

Gradually, the idea of immediately acquiring an American House in Vṛndāvana began to dwindle. Prabhupāda needed his own place for his disciples, and that would take time.

* * *

With regular medication, massages, rest, and the heat of Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda felt himself recovering. By mid-September he declared himself ninety percent fit to return to the United States. He predicted that he would be back there by the end of October.

B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Prabhupāda's Godbrother, whose āśrama was in Navadvīpa, West Bengal, wrote to invite Prabhupāda to spend the month of Kārttika with him at the āśrama and join him for his Vyāsa-pūjā celebration. Śrīla Prabhupāda liked the idea of going to the holy land of Navadvīpa, where Lord Caitanya had spent His early years, and seeing his Godbrother. He also wanted to visit Delhi again and inquire about printing his books.

"Swamiji," Acyutānanda asked, "when you go to Navadvīpa am I supposed to stay here in Vṛndāvana and study?"

"Don't you want to see the birthplace of Lord Caitanya?" Prabhupāda asked.

Acyutānanda did, and Prabhupāda, Kīrtanānanda Swami, and Acyutānanda left Vṛndāvana together and returned to the Chippiwada temple in Delhi.

For Prabhupāda's two disciples, life at the Chippiwada temple was hard. Delhi was blazing hot and lacked the charm of Vṛndāvana. There was water for only two hours a day, early in the morning, and that only a slow trickle. They would fill two clay jugs for Prabhupāda's room and several buckets for his bath and their own, and then there would be no more water for the rest of the day. A mongoose ran freely through the building.

"Do they eat snakes?" Acyutānanda asked.

"They eat snakes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "they eat garbage, they eat anything." Prabhupāda, who regarded the heat, the lack of water, and even the mongoose as normal, was undisturbed. Several young Indian musicians in the adjacent room regularly played cinema music on their electric organ, bongo drums, and electric guitars, rehearsing for a dance. Prabhupāda tolerated it.

Sri Krishna Pandit praised Prabhupāda's work in America and his English translation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As manager of the Chippiwada Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple and secretary of an active Hinduism society, Sri Krishna Pandit was interested in spreading Hindu dharma, and therefore he wanted Prabhupāda to speak at the nearby Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple, one of Delhi's most popular Hindu temples. Prabhupāda agreed to go and take with him Acyutānanda (Kīrtanānanda Swami had already left for the West on August 22).

The Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple was on Chandi Chowk. After a short walk through some of the busiest, most congested streets of Old Delhi, Prabhupāda and Acyutānanda removed their shoes at the door and entered the temple. The main deity was Lord Śiva, but there were many others: Rāma, Durgā,

Kālī, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Hanumān. The crowds stood before the elaborate altars, viewing and petitioning the various deities.

Acyutānanda had learned about demigod worship from Prabhupāda at 26 Second Avenue. According to Bhagavad-gītā, demigods fulfill only material desires and are therefore worshiped by the less intelligent. A Vaiṣṇava, Prabhupāda had said, respects the demigods—in fact, he respects all living beings, even the ant—but he worships only the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, or Viṣṇu.

Acyutānanda had already seen firsthand that impersonalists were misleading Indians to disavow the personal form of God and accept all methods of worship as equal. Most Indians had no clear understanding of Bhagavad-gītā or Kṛṣṇa. Acyutānanda kept this in mind as Prabhupāda led him in bowing down before a few of the demigods' altars. Then Prabhupāda brought him before the Deity of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. "Just see," Prabhupāda said, "Kṛṣṇa is just playing His flute. As for the demigods, someone is holding bows and arrows, someone is holding clubs, someone is holding weapons, but Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are just dancing, and Kṛṣṇa is holding a flute. So He is the Supreme Lord."

In one large room a heavyset man with a great white beard and wearing flower garlands sat on several pillows. Many people stood staring at him. He reminded Acyutānanda of Santa Claus. "Swamiji, who is that?" Acyutānanda asked.

"Some yogī," Prabhupāda replied indifferently.

The main lecture hall had a large painting of Lord Śiva on the wall and was crowded with people—women in colored sārīs and many of the men in bright turbans. Amid such a welter of rituals and worshipers, Acyutānanda felt protected by Swamiji. They sat on the dais, and Sri Krishna Pandit introduced his friend Bhaktivedanta Swami to the crowd. Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke in Hindi for about an hour.

Walking back to Chippiwada, Acyutānanda wondered why Swamiji had gone to speak at a place with such hodgepodge worship. But without his asking, it occurred to him that Swamiji was willing to speak about Kṛṣṇa anywhere to anyone. Hadn't he come to New York City? And what could be a more hodgepodge place than New York's Lower East Side?

Sitting on the veranda outside his room, Prabhupāda could see the huge domes of the Jama Mosque in the early evening sky. One evening, as Prabhupāda sat softly chanting japa and as Acyutānanda, who had not yet memorized the Gāyatrī mantra, sat nearby reading it to himself, a Hindu gentleman came and conversed with Prabhupāda. Acyutānanda soon finished the Gāyatrī mantra and sat listening to his spiritual master talk in Hindi to the unknown gentleman. Acyutānanda could catch only a word here or there—some mention of Āyur Vedic medicine, addresses, Indian names, cities. They talked for hours, and Acyutānanda wondered who this man was who could speak so long with Swamiji. When the man left, Acyutānanda asked, "Swamiji, was he your Godbrother?"

Prabhupāda said, "No."

"Is he a swami?"

Prabhupāda said, "No."

"Is he one of your relatives?"

"No."

"Well, who was he?"

"He's my friend!" Prabhupāda answered emphatically.

Sometimes Prabhupāda's visitors would bring donations of cloth or fruits or even complete cooked meals in metal tiffins. One visitor—a middle-aged woman who had heard Prabhupāda speak at the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple—came to Prabhupāda's office in Chippiwada requesting initiation. Prabhupāda spoke with her, agreed, and had Acyutānanda prepare a small fire sacrifice. At her initiation he gave her the name Mukunda dāsī. She came daily to clean Prabhupāda's room, and when she saw that his wooden-peg sandals were broken, she bought him new ones.

Chandrashekhar had known Prabhupāda for several years and was supposed to have been his secretary. But he was a drunkard. Prabhupāda suspected him of having stolen from his mailbox more than two thousand rupees during the past two years. Prabhupāda's Chippiwada address was listed in his magazines and books, and people had been sending money for books and Back to Godhead subscriptions. Even in the past two months, Prabhupāda's disciples had written that they were enclosing money in their letters, but Prabhupāda never found any. One day he caught sight of Chandrashekhar in the building and asked him, "Where is my mailbox key?"

"I believe you have it," Chandrashekhar replied. "Or maybe Sri Krishna Pandit has it." Chandrashekhar was drunk.

"Swamiji," Acyutānanda said angrily, "maybe we should make a police case."

Prabhupāda shook his head, "No."

"Well," Acyutānanda said, "if he's not punished by the law, then in his next birth Kṛṣṇa will punish him."

"That's true," Prabhupāda agreed. Chandrashekhar looked fearfully from Prabhupāda to his American disciple.

"Then there's only one thing to do," Acyutānanda said. "Shall I call the police?"

"No," said Prabhupāda, "I forgive him." Yet only a few days later Prabhupāda's record player disappeared, and Prabhupāda suspected the drunkard, Chandrashekhar.

Prabhupāda brought Acyutānanda with him to his bank, the Bank of Baroda, to exchange some American currency. As they were about to enter the door, the guard refused them entry, thinking they were sādhus come to beg. Prabhupāda was angry. He spoke loudly in Hindi to the guard, an old man with a shotgun, a big strap of bullets, and a shabby semi-official uniform. "I have an account here," Prabhupāda protested. Finally the guard allowed them to enter.

Prabhupāda went straight to the manager and complained. "Do you think," Prabhupāda said, "because I am a sādhu I am to be regarded as a beggar?" Prabhupāda told the man of his organization in America and his account in the Bank of Baroda. The manager apologized and reprimanded the guard.

One day Prabhupāda sent Acyutānanda to a certain restaurant. "If you want to see varieties of Indian food," Prabhupāda said, "tell the man you want ten rupees of sweets and ten rupees of salty preparations—that is called miṣṭi and nimaka. And just see the varieties." Acyutānanda was sick and couldn't imagine eating a lot of sweets. But he stopped by the restaurant and looked. When he returned to the temple at Chippiwada he told Prabhupāda that he had seen the food, although he couldn't eat it. "Yes, but just see the varieties," Prabhupāda concluded. And he explained how Kṛṣṇa consciousness was personal and full of varieties, not dry.

Another American disciple joined Prabhupāda—Rāmānuja, from Haight-Ashbury. He had been initiated just before Swamiji had left San Francisco, and he sported a full black beard. Prabhupāda didn't like the beard. Cautiously and indirectly he mentioned it: but Rāmānuja's beard stayed. Rāmānuja carried a book about Tibetan Buddhism, and he didn't seem fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy. But here he was, one of the looser, sentimental San Francisco devotees, ready for Indian adventures with Swamiji.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda visited the wealthy Delhi industrialist Mr. Seth Dalmia to discuss plans for printing some of his books in India. Mr. Dalmia received him well but gave only vague promises of help. Prabhupāda also met with Hitsaran Sharma, Mr. Dalmia's secretary, who worked closely with Hanuman Prasad Poddar of the popular religious publishing company Gītā Press. Śrīla Prabhupāda was already acquainted with all three gentlemen, since they had all donated toward his first volume of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Prabhupāda wanted Gītā Press to publish his Gītopaniṣad and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Hitsaran Sharma showed him an illustrated Gītā in Hindi poetry that he had recently published. "But my Gītā, my Bhāgavatam," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, appearing disgusted, "is the description of God. It is the description of Kṛṣṇa." Mr. Sharma said he couldn't see how Gītā Press could print Prabhupāda's voluminous writings. Nevertheless, Prabhupāda still considered privately printing Gītopaniṣad, with Mr. Sharma as his agent.

On October 11, Prabhupāda wrote to Brahmānanda,

We must have our books printed; we have wasted much time in the matter of editing and finding out a suitable publisher. When I was alone there was three volumes published but during the last two years I could not publish a single volume more. It is a great defeat. If I have one or two sincere souls like you and if we can make more publications, then our mission will be a great success. I am

prepared to sit down underneath a tree with one sincere soul and in such activity I shall be freed of all diseases.

* * *

Devotees from America were regularly writing Swamiji, anxious to see him again in good health. But he didn't want to leave India, he explained, until he personally saw that the printing of his *Gītopaniṣad* was under way. Printing *Gītopaniṣad* and obtaining approval for permanent residency in the U.S. were the two short-term goals he wished to achieve before returning. But he thought often of his return to America.

As you are all feeling my separation, similarly I'm also anxious to return as soon as possible. I think I'm fit to go back to your country at present and as scheduled previously I'm sure by the end of October. I must be fit to return, but before this there are many things to be done. I'm not yet assured of the permanent visa. The best thing will be that from each center an invitation should be sent that my presence is urgently required... Presently I'm very much anxious to begin printing here if Macmillan company does not take up the work. Please, therefore, let me know yes or no from Macmillan. If he is not serious, then immediately send the manuscripts finished or not to the following address: Pundit Hitsaran Sharma c/o Dalmia Enterprises, Scindia House, New Delhi. After dispatching let me know and I shall do the needful.

Indian friends who visited Prabhupāda's room listened eagerly as he told them about America—the millions of cars and the superhighways and thousands of young people rejecting their fathers' wealth. But Prabhupāda's visitors weren't fully able to understand his visit to America. Not that they were too simple to understand and not just that they had never traveled in the West. Prabhupāda's experience in America consisted of intimate spiritual relationships with his disciples. How could an outsider understand the dynamics of his temples and his disciples in the West? How could anyone except Prabhupāda and his disciples understand these things?

My mind is always with you. Practically your country is my home now. India is a foreign country for me. The reason is that my spiritual family is there and my material relationships are in India; therefore factually where my spiritual family exists, there is my home.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision of a worldwide society of devotees preaching in temples and publishing books—a vision he had had even before he had gone to America—was now becoming manifest. But it was dependent on him. In his absence his disciples were sustained only by carrying out his orders and receiving his letters. When Dayānanda and Nandarāṇī had gone from the San Francisco temple to start a temple in Los Angeles, it had been Swamiji's instructions that had sustained and guided them: "Wherever there is a new branch of our society for Krishna Consciousness I become very very happy. And my blessings in heart and soul are with you." On receipt of Swamiji's letter, they knew they had done the right thing. No matter that husband and wife sometimes quarreled and that there wasn't enough money—the main thing was that Swamiji was pleased.

From Boston, Satsvarūpa wrote that he and the other devotees there were moving from an apartment to a rented storefront near Boston University. The first time Satsvarūpa entered the new storefront, he found on the floor an aerogram from Swamiji, dated October 6 from Delhi.

I can understand that you have secured a very nice place in Boston and there is a very good possibility of pushing our movement amongst the student community there. Our movement is certainly very much appealing to the younger section of your country and if we are successful in the matter of attracting the student community in your country certainly this movement will scatter all over the world and fulfill the foretelling of Lord Caitanya that in every village and every town of the world the Lord will be famous for His glorious sankirtana movement. Please try for this with your heart and soul and your life will be a successful mission.

The letter was as good as Swamiji coming personally to open the storefront and begin the preaching. It gave Satsvarūpa full direction and inspiration. And it was personal. In that same letter, Prabhupāda had written,

I am always aspiring after returning to your care and overload you with typewriting tasks... I hope we shall very soon meet again and help each other in the matter of discharging Krishna conscious engagements. I am now 90% alright and I think I can return safely. This typewriting work is done by me. For two days I am alone and doing everything myself as experiment. This proves that I am now well. Please offer my blessings to all the boys and girls there.

In New Mexico, Subala was trying to arrange public speaking engagements for Prabhupāda's return, and Prabhupāda was encouraging him: "If you think I can be on television by the first week in December, then you can arrange for it because I must be in your country by the middle of November."

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Janārdana in Montreal answering his philosophical doubts and encouraging him to be patient with his spiritually reluctant wife. And to Rāya Rāma, who was editing Back to Godhead magazine in New York, he gave another kind of thoughtful assurance.

I am very happy that since it [BTG] is entrusted to you the things are improving. This means that Krishna is giving you more & more facilities. Krishna is such a nice boss that he gives more facilities & improvement to the sincere servant.

On October 9, the day Prabhupāda started for Calcutta, he left behind a different kind of letter for Sri Krishna Pandit. Prabhupāda had been negotiating with Sri Krishna Pandit to purchase the Chippiwada temple for ISKCON or at least to rent the single room through a formal contract. Prabhupāda wanted the room as a Delhi headquarters for printing his books. On the day of his departure, however, Sri Krishna Pandit was unavailable, and Prabhupāda left him a short handwritten note.

If you are not settling anything with the room, then I may not come back to Delhi any more. I will go to U.S.A. directly from Calcutta via the Pacific route for which Sri Dalmia Seth has already promised for the ticket.

SPL 28: India Revisited: Part 2

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

India Revisited: Part 2

Prabhupāda's train, the Kalka Mail, pulled into Delhi Station. Prabhupāda and his two disciples had tickets with reserved seat numbers—but no car number. So while Prabhupāda waited with the baggage, Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja ran from one end of the train to the other looking for their car.

After they had found their seats and boarded, Acyutānanda untied Prabhupāda's bedding and spread it open on the upper tier. Prabhupāda climbed the little ladder, sat comfortably on his cotton-stuffed quilt, and opened his Sanskrit Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, while Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja took their seats. It would take around twenty-four hours to reach Calcutta.

Near the end of the journey, a group of educated Bengali gentlemen struck up a philosophical conversation with the Swami. "We do not worship any form," said one, speaking fluent English in a loud, deep voice. "We have a marble omkāra that we worship, and we sit and pray to that."

"That is also a form," said Prabhupāda. He was reluctant to attack their philosophical position directly.

"We practice karma-yoga," the gentleman went on, not heeding Prabhupāda's previous point. "Because in karma-yoga you can stay within your position."

"But karma-yoga is not full surrender of the soul," said Prabhupāda. "One must come to the stage of bhakti."

"Oh, no," the man protested, "emotionalism is very harmful. Karma-yoga—"

Śrīla Prabhupāda exploded: "Karma-yoga is for the fools!" Silence.

Another man, not with the Bengalis but seated beside them, spoke up. "Obviously Swamiji is a learned scholar," he said. "You shouldn't argue like that." The Bengali that Prabhupāda had shouted at got up and moved to another seat. Later, he came back.

"Are you insulted?" Prabhupāda asked him.

"No, no, no," he replied. "But I have never heard anyone say that about the teachings of the Gītā."

The Bengalis then talked with Acyutānanda, lighting their cigarettes and smoking freely before him, although they had not dared to do so before Prabhupāda (it wasn't proper to smoke in front of a sādhu). Bengalis, Acyutānanda told them, citing one of Prabhupāda's examples, were very sorry that East Pakistan had been cut off from the rest of Bengal. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness could elevate people to international, universal consciousness. Then there wouldn't be any such division. The Bengalis appreciated Acyutānanda's remark, though they continued to blow smoke in his face as the train rattled over the last miles to Calcutta.

Prabhupāda was greeted at Calcutta's Howrah Station by relatives, mostly from his sister's family, and by devotees of the Goswami Math. About fifty people were on hand. They offered Prabhupāda flower garlands and sandalwood paste and then escorted him and his disciples into a car. Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja noticed that although Swamiji's sister was shorter and more rotund than Prabhupāda, her facial features were strikingly similar. Her name was Bhavatarini, but Prabhupāda told them to call her Pisīmā, “aunt.”

As Prabhupāda rode through the streets he saw many images of goddess Kālī, ten-armed, riding a lion. Calcutta was observing the biggest religious celebration in Bengal, Kālī-pūjā, a month of festivities in honor of the goddess Kālī. Throughout the city, brass bands and radio music blared, and there were decorative lights, stages, and tents.

When Prabhupāda arrived at Pisīmā's house in south Calcutta, his relatives seated him and performed an āratī ceremony in his honor, reverently offering him the traditional items: incense, a flaming lamp, flowers. They also bathed his feet. He sat smiling within the crowded room of relatives, who were proud of his having journeyed to America on behalf of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

As Prabhupāda's family members sang Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana, from outside the room the ladies of the house began singing a high, shrill whooping sound. Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja were startled.

Pisīmā had prepared a large feast, much of it cooked in mustard seed oil, for the homecoming celebration. And Prabhupāda satisfied her by honoring the prasādam, even though he wasn't feeling well and was tired from the train ride.

Soon after the festivities Prabhupāda and his disciples retired. Again his health wavered—this time because of his sister's heavy cooking—and he felt a strain on his heart. He sent for an Āyur Vedic doctor, who taught Acyutānanda how to do a very gentle massage to help circulation and restricted Prabhupāda from sweets.

As Prabhupāda recovered he began regularly lecturing in his room during the evening. Although he spoke in English (for his disciples), the room would soon fill to capacity with relatives and friends. There were generally disturbances from outside due to the noises of Kālī-pūjā. Nearby Pisīmā's house was a large tent, a center for evening street parties, which included a sweets counter, fireworks, and an excessively loud public address system that incongruously blared Julie Andrews singing songs from *The Sound of Music*.

One evening as Prabhupāda spoke—“My only qualification is that I have unflinching faith in my spiritual master”—a large firecracker exploded right outside the door. The audience smiled tolerantly. “Yes,” Prabhupāda said, taking the explosion as confirmation of his words, “it is glorious.”

One night Prabhupāda explained that according to Bhagavad-gītā, demigod worshipers are less intelligent. People worship Kālī for material rewards, he said, but since all material things are temporary, such worship is inferior to the worship of Kṛṣṇa. Kālī is not able to grant the worshiper liberation from birth and death.

"Which is better?" Acyutānanda asked, "the worship of the Christians and Jews, which is mostly impersonal, or the worship of the non-Absolute by the worshipers of Kālī?"

"Worship of Kālī is better," Prabhupāda said, "because the worshipers are in the Vedic system. They are more likely to bow down to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or chant Hare Kṛṣṇa than a Christian or Jew. There is a chance that they will become Kṛṣṇa devotees in the future, if they lose their material attachments."

Prabhupāda regularly invited his Godbrothers and their disciples to join him in America. Sometimes he seemed to do it just to get them at least to think more of preaching. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had once chided that the Gaudiya Math āśrama was no more than a "joint mess," the members going out each day and collecting enough alms so that they could eat together, but with no dynamic vision for preaching. So Prabhupāda's frequent invitations—"You should go to America. Come back with me"—would stir them, even if they couldn't actually come. On visiting the āśrama of Bhaktisāraṅga Goswami, Prabhupāda saw that the audience consisted almost entirely of old widows. But he spoke as usual.

One day, Prabhupāda's Godbrother Haridāsa Swami came by. He was heavyset and loud, and he spoke very rapidly: "Very happy to see you coming here from America. This is wonderful—Kṛṣṇa is the summum bonum, the cause of all causes—I want you to come to my temple..."

When Haridāsa Mahārāja went into a separate room, Prabhupāda turned to Acyutānanda: "He wants us to go to his temple. But to go there I will have to go onto a ricksha and then onto a tramcar and then onto a train and then another ricksha." Aware of Prabhupāda's weak condition, Acyutānanda began shaking his head negatively.

When Haridāsa Mahārāja returned, Acyutānanda said that Swamiji couldn't come to his maṭha. "Who are you?" Haridāsa Mahārāja said angrily. "You are just a brahmacārī! You should risk your life!"

Acyutānanda replied, "I will risk my life, but I can't risk my spiritual master's life."

Haridāsa Mahārāja left insulted. "Don't worry," Prabhupāda said. "He is just very talkative."

Prabhupāda paid a visit to B. P. Keśava Mahārāja, the Godbrother who had awarded him the sannyāsa order in 1959. Prabhupāda sat on the floor and spoke in Bengali to his Godbrother, who was very old and apparently on his deathbed. Prabhupāda had Acyutānanda sing for Keśava Mahārāja. Keśava Mahārāja requested Prabhupāda to visit his āśrama, Devānanda Math, in Navadvīpa.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda had wanted to return to the U.S. as a permanent resident, but his students in America hadn't been able to get the necessary clearance from the U.S. immigration department. The devotees in Boston had gotten in touch with a few Harvard Indology professors but had obtained no signed statements about Prabhupāda's importance. All the ISKCON centers had written formal

letters inviting A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami and had presented copies to the U.S. immigration office. But unless the devotees could produce something more impressive, like a government recommendation or a university's offer for him to join their faculty, Prabhupāda could not become a U.S. resident.

On October 13 Prabhupāda wrote to his disciples in Montreal:

I am very anxious to go to Montreal. Therefore you must try your best to get my immigration visa on the basis of my being an authorized Vaishnava minister, based on Śrīmad Bhagawatam and Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā.

Rather than wait indefinitely for permanent residency, Prabhupāda decided to apply for a visitor's visa. He went with Acyutānanda to the U.S. Consulate on Harrington Road. There, in the middle of Calcutta, they entered a small piece of America, with everything shiny, new, and efficient: air conditioners, stainless steel water coolers, electric security doors, U.S. Marines, and American flags. Sitting before the secretary of the Consulate, Prabhupāda looked small and humble. "I want a visa to see my students in America," he said softly.

"Do you have any letters?" the secretary asked. Acyutānanda handed over the letters from the temples. The secretary reviewed them and quickly gave Prabhupāda a four-month visa. While leaving the building Prabhupāda remarked, "I will just get anything, and then it can be extended."

On October 19, Prabhupāda wrote Hayagrīva regarding his imminent return.

I am already preparing for returning to U.S.A. & I have obtained a visitor's visa the day before yesterday. Most probably I shall take the first chance to return to U.S.A. upon my return from Navadvīpa.

And on October 22 he wrote Umāpati.

You will be glad to know that I have already secured a visitor's visa to your country and have asked my travel agent to book my seat on the earliest possible date. I think I shall be in your midst by the middle of Nov.

* * *

On October 24 Prabhupāda traveled with Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja to Navadvīpa. Although the local train took four hours, the lush Bengal countryside gradually revealed its heavenly beauty, and Prabhupāda's health seemed to improve just from the pleasant journey. By the time they arrived at Navadvīpa, Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja were also feeling relief from the rigors of Calcutta; for the first time in weeks they could open their eyes without blinking through drops of perspiration.

A large kīrtana party of brahmacārīs, mostly members of Keśava Mahārāja's Devānanda Gaudiya Math, met Śrīla Prabhupāda at the Navadvīpa train station. The brahmacārīs were meticulously neat, with their robes all dyed the same shade of saffron, their Vaiṣṇava tilaka markings bold and distinct, their heads smoothly shaved, their śikhās precise. They offered Prabhupāda and his party

aromatic garlands made from flowers resembling lotuses and gathered around Śrīla Prabhupāda with worshipful enthusiasm. Also present were a few of Śrīdhara Mahārāja's disciples, waiting with rickshas to take Prabhupāda and his disciples to their guru's āśrama. Although between the two groups there was an unspoken competition for Prabhupāda's presence, he had previously agreed to go to Śrīdhara Mahārāja's place. He promised the members of Devānanda Math that he would visit them next.

Soon after leaving the station the rickshas turned onto a road lined with lush tropical vegetation: banana trees, tall bamboos, exotic blossoming flowers. Prabhupāda saw simple villagers working near their straw-and-mud huts and, in the distance, the spire of Śrīdhara Mahārāja's temple.

A kīrtana party greeted Prabhupāda at the outer gates of Śrīdhara Mahārāja's āśrama, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and playing karatālas and clay mṛdaṅgas. Prabhupāda entered the temple, offered obeisances before the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and then went to see his Godbrother.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja was very old, his sight failing, his joints stiff with arthritis. He stayed mostly in his room or sometimes on his veranda and moved only with slow, rickety motions. He was an austere and kindly Vaiṣṇava and smiled heartily on seeing Prabhupāda and his disciples. In fluent English he began praising Prabhupāda's preaching in America, repeatedly using Prabhupāda's phrase "Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Swamiji's work, he said, was the fulfillment of Lord Caitanya's prophecy that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would one day spread all over the world. He laughed and smiled and praised the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement with no trace of jealousy.

"So you appreciate this phrase, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Prabhupāda smiled.

"Yes," Śrīdhara Mahārāja replied, "and the disciples of Swami Mahārāja also." And he turned towards Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja. "With very little effort your preaching will go far."

The boys were astonished. This was really something to write home about: sitting on the roof of a temple in this jungle paradise with old Śrīdhara Mahārāja appreciating Swamiji's work as the greatest work on behalf of Lord Caitanya, and Swamiji sitting relaxed, grinning, and making humble replies! It was the high point of the trip.

My dear Satsvarupa,

Please accept my blessings. I have already duly received the invitation from Harvard University. It is understood that they are scheduling me for 20 Nov. between 6 and 10 p.m. I can start immediately on the strength of my visitor's visa, but I am awaiting for Mukunda's reply for his trying for my permanent visa. Yesterday we have all come to Navadvipa. This place is another establishment of one of my Godbrothers. It is very nice and extensive place and my Godbrother, B. R. Sridhar Mahārāj, has spared one entire nice house for our stay. He has also agreed to cooperate with our society. We shall observe his birthday ceremony tomorrow and the brahmacaris shall learn how to celebrate the spiritual master's birthday.

Vyāsa-pūjā day, the observance of B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja's birthday, was October 27. His disciples had erected a paṇḍāl on the temple road, and about a hundred people attended. Śrīdhara Mahārāja

sat on his vyāsāsana, and Prabhupāda and other sannyāsīs, all wearing flower garlands, sat in chairs next to Śrīdhara Mahārāja. Prabhupāda spoke in Bengali. Some of Śrīdhara Mahārāja's disciples, inspired by Prabhupāda's preaching about the glories of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West, delivered speeches in English as Vyāsa-pūjā homages to their spiritual master. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, also speaking in English, gave a very scientific lecture on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the senses. Afterwards Prabhupāda told his disciples, "He has very high realizations, but he is keeping them to himself."

Every morning before dawn Śrīdhara Mahārāja sent out a party of brahmacārīs to perform kīrtana in the villages. On Prabhupāda's request, Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja joined them, leaving before sunrise and returning at dusk. Although Prabhupāda and Śrīdhara Mahārāja usually remained at the temple, one day they got into a ricksha and accompanied the chanting party through the streets of Navadvīpa.

The festival at the Devānanda Math was a big affair. In contrast to Bhaktisāraṅga Goswami's āśrama in Calcutta, where only widows had attended, B. P. Keśava Mahārāja's Devānanda Math had about two hundred brahmacārīs and twenty sannyāsīs. Some of the brahmacārīs, however, were not full-time but were attending school outside; so the āśrama's atmosphere was a little like that of a social club. But when the kīrtana and the circumambulation of the temple began, seven hundred people took part. The impeccably dressed sannyāsīs—whose every piece of saffron cloth, including their cloth-wrapped daṇḍas, was dyed exactly the same shade—danced back and forth before the Deities. A dozen sannyāsīs danced in a group, their daṇḍas moving together, dipping and rising, forward and back, to the delight of the brahmacārīs.

Prabhupāda sat on a dais with other dignitaries and spoke to the festival audience. Acyutānanda, on Prabhupāda's request, spoke a few words in Bengali, bringing laughs and applause. Śrīdhara Mahārāja spoke gravely in Bengali. A sannyāsī from the Devānanda Math, speaking for their absent leader, B. P. Keśava Mahārāja, proclaimed in impassioned tones that although Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement had been predicted to spread throughout the world, no one had known how it could be possible. Now, thanks to the work of Bhaktivedanta Swami, it was happening.

After a large feast in the evening, Prabhupāda's party returned to Śrīdhara Mahārāja's āśrama. Śrīdhara Mahārāja intimated to Prabhupāda that the Devānanda Math emphasized quantity whereas his own āśrama emphasized quality. Curious as to what this meant, Acyutānanda wanted to ask Prabhupāda. But the time didn't seem appropriate.

After nine days in Navadvīpa Prabhupāda was ready to return to Calcutta and prepare for his trip back to the United States. He and his two disciples took rickshas to Navadvīpa and caught a morning train to Calcutta.

On the train, Acyutānanda timidly put forward the question that had been on his mind: "Swamiji, what did you and Śrīdhara Mahārāja discuss?"

"Oh, many, many things," Prabhupāda replied. "But if I were to tell you now, you would faint." After a silence Prabhupāda added, "Still, I offered him to be president of our Society. I knew he would not accept. He is keeping things within him. Anyway, this is all beyond you. Do not have

any ill feelings towards any of my Godbrothers. They are all great souls. There are just some differences on preaching and spreading. Even in your mind do not feel any ill will towards them. At the same time, do not mix very thickly with them."

Acyutānanda suggested, "Maybe if these two sannyāsīs had each other's qualities combined..."

"Ah, yes," Prabhupāda said, "now you have understood me."

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda's intention in coming to Calcutta was simply to prepare to leave for America. He had his visitor's visa already, but he thought that if he stayed in India a little longer, in San Francisco Mukunda might be able to secure permanent American residency for him. He went to his sister's house to spend his last days in Calcutta there, but after only a few days he felt that the Rādhā-Govinda Deity—the Deity he had worshiped in his childhood—was calling him.

When Prabhupāda had been no more than an infant, his servant used to take him and his cousin Subuddhi Mullik on a perambulator, wheel them into the temple courtyard, and take them before the altar of Rādhā-Govinda. And as soon as Prabhupāda could walk, his father would hold his hand and take him before the Deity every day. Sometimes Prabhupāda would go alone and stand for hours gazing upon Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who appeared very beautiful to him with Their slanted eyes and fine dress and ornaments. It had been for the pleasure of Rādhā-Govinda that as a child, beginning at the age of five, he had performed his miniature Ratha-yātrā festival.

Just two weeks ago, when Prabhupāda had been staying at his sister's house, his health had prevented him from going to north Calcutta to see the Deity; so he had gone to Navadvīpa without taking Their blessings. But now, although still weak and although preoccupied with traveling to the U.S., he felt that the Deity was calling him.

For the past 150 years, the Rādhā-Govinda temple had been maintained by the aristocratic Mulliks, a branch of Prabhupāda's own family. The Mulliks had owned the entire block on Harrison Road (now Mahātma Gandhi Road), and rents from the block-long building opposite the temple had financed the opulent worship of Rādhā-Govinda. In those days the Deities had been worshiped on a gorgeous altar in the large kīrtana hall, and They had been dressed in silks and ornamented with gilded and bejeweled crowns and necklaces. All the pious Vaiṣṇava families of the neighborhood would visit; and on Janmāṣṭamī, Kṛṣṇa's birthday, even British gentlemen and ladies would come.

But today the Mullik family possessed only remnants of the European art and furnishings that had once filled their homes and temple—relics from an age of former grandeur. And the worship of Rādhā-Govinda had pitifully deteriorated.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was pained to see the neglect. No longer were Rādhā and Govinda the center of the Mulliks' lives. The Deity worship still continued—conducted by paid brāhmaṇas—but few people came to see. The main attraction now was the golden deity of the goddess Kālī on the large altar in the kīrtana hall. Rādhā and Govinda, "in the family" for many generations, had been relegated to a small upstairs room in the Mullik compound. Their dress was no longer elegant,

Their valuable crowns and ornaments had disappeared, and there were no large kīrtanas as before. Only a paid brāhmaṇa came in the morning to rub sandalwood pulp on Their shining bodies, dress Them carefully in whatever simple clothes remained, and place jasmine garlands around Their necks while a widow or two watched the silent proceedings.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness was dying in India, dying from neglect. At least it was dying here in Calcutta. And in many other places in India, even in Vṛndāvana, the impersonal philosophy prevailed, and grand old temples had become residences for pigeons, monkeys, and dogs. Sad as it was, it only reinforced Prabhupāda's conviction of the need to return to the fertile ground in the West. Although here in India the spirit of devotion was dying, in the West it was just beginning to grow—in New York, San Francisco, Montreal, Boston.

If pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness were dying in India, then why shouldn't it be transplanted in the fertile West? There it would flourish. It would spread worldwide and even back to India again. When India, bent on following the West, saw the materially advanced Americans taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, she would reevaluate her own culture.

Prabhupāda saw a Kṛṣṇa conscious revolution beginning in the United States. He didn't consider himself its creator; he was the servant of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Lord Caitanya's desire was that every Indian help to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness worldwide. Unfortunately, the very verses in the scriptures that prophesied a worldwide Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement were a puzzle even to most of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers. They admitted it.

But soon they would see. There was great potential in the West. Prabhupāda had shown many of his Godbrothers the newspaper articles—"Swami's Flock" chanting in Tompkins Square Park, "Ancient Trance Dance" at Stanford University—and he had brought some disciples with him. These were only beginnings. Much more had to be done.

And who would help? B. P. Keśava Mahārāja was dying. Śrīdhara Mahārāja couldn't come out. Who else? Most Indians were impersonalists, nondevotional yogīs, or demigod worshipers. As Śrīla Prabhupāda stood before the Rādhā-Govinda Deity, explaining to Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja how he had worshiped Them in his childhood and how They had been his first inspiration in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he understood deeply that he must take Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, even if singlehandedly. Of course, he was not alone; he had disciples. And they were opening new centers even in his absence. He would have to return to them very soon and supervise his growing movement.

The Mulliks regarded Prabhupāda more as a relative than as a spiritual leader. To them he was a hometown cousin who had done something successful in America. Narendranath Mullik, a childhood friend of Prabhupāda's, called Prabhupāda Dādā, "brother," and regularly joked with him.

The Mulliks were glad to give Prabhupāda and his two followers a large room in the temple compound for as long as they wanted to stay in Calcutta. Prabhupāda set up his usual arrangement: a mat on the floor, a low table for a desk, and beside the desk his few possessions. Here he could

study and write, receive guests, or rest. Daily some local women brought Prabhupāda and his disciples simple prasādam in a tiffin.

The Kālī-pūjā celebrations drew large crowds into the main hall before the Kālī deity, and Prabhupāda gave regular lectures there from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He also spoke in the homes of various Mullik families. The hosts, members of the dwindling Bengali aristocracy, would offer Prabhupāda and his disciples Rādhā-Govinda prasādam: cut fruits, water chestnuts, minced ginger, and soaked, salted mung beans.

Most of those who came to visit Prabhupāda in his room were not really interested in spiritual life, but they wanted his blessings. There was a local brāhmaṇa whose occupation was to go from shop to shop carrying a few flowers, a cup of water, and a brass container with sandalwood paste and kuṅkuma powder. Using this paraphernalia, he would offer a blessing to the shopkeepers every day and receive a few paisā in payment. Knowing Prabhupāda to be a Vaiṣṇava, the brāhmaṇa came to see him to receive a spiritual benediction. The man's forehead was decorated with both Vaiṣṇava tilaka (two vertical lines) and Śaivite tilaka (three horizontal lines). After the man left, Acyutānanda asked, "Swamiji, who was that?"

"He is a hired brāhmaṇa," Prabhupāda said. "When he goes to the Vaiṣṇavas he gives them blessings, and when he goes to the Śaivites he gets money. He has to make a living."

Another man came, asserting that he wanted to teach Prabhupāda's disciples Hindi. He asked Prabhupāda to help him get to America, but Prabhupāda told him, "You must take sannyāsa. Then I will bring you to America." After two visits, the man stopped coming.

A Mullik relation, a small, bald, bright-eyed man, came by one day carrying a book entitled *Interesting Studies*. He posed philosophical questions—simple queries about karma, jñāna, and bhakti—but then would interrupt Prabhupāda and answer them himself. Finally when the man asked one of his questions, Prabhupāda replied, "So what is your answer?" The man gave a general answer. But later, when Prabhupāda began explaining that Lord Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of Bhagavad-gītā, is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the man interrupted: "You may call God 'Kṛṣṇa,' call Him 'Śiva,' call Him—"

"No," Prabhupāda said. "Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord, and all others are demigods." The man became a little nervous and quoted a popular Bengali impersonalist who taught that all gods and all methods of worship are the same.

"He's an upstart," Prabhupāda said. "That is not the teaching of the Gītā. What is this other teaching? It is all utter confusion."

"If you go on speaking like this," the man said angrily, "I'll have to leave this place. Please don't criticize this paramahansa."

"Why not?" Prabhupāda said. "He is a concocter." The man got up and left, calling out, "You don't know Kṛṣṇa!" as he left the room.

Prabhupāda turned to Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja and smiled: "Every time you introduce Kṛṣṇa they say, 'Why only Kṛṣṇa?' But that is what Kṛṣṇa says. *Mattah parataram nānyat*: 'There is no truth superior to Me.' These rascal impersonalists have ruined Bengal."

One day a man gave Prabhupāda a two-hundred-rupee donation, and Prabhupāda immediately asked the pūjārī for an old set of Rādhā Govinda's clothes, gave the clothes to some of the temple ladies along with the two hundred rupees, and asked that the ladies make gold embroidered dresses for Rādhā-Govinda. "Rādhā-Govinda are taking care of us," he said, "so we can take care of Them also."

Rāmānuja's beard was huge. Looking like an ordinary hippie, he misrepresented Śrīla Prabhupāda wherever they went. Prabhupāda told Acyutānanda, "Tell your friend to shave." Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja talked, but Rāmānuja wouldn't shave. Wanting Rāmānuja to agree on his own, Prabhupāda didn't ask him again, but when a copy of the latest Back to Godhead magazine arrived from the States, Prabhupāda got an idea. Two illustrations in the magazine showed Haridāsa Ṭhākura converting a prostitute. After her conversion the prostitute had shaved her head. Showing the pictures to Rāmānuja, Prabhupāda asked, "What is the difference between this picture and that picture?"

"I don't know, Swamiji," Rāmānuja replied.

"No," Prabhupāda said, pointing to the pictures. "What is the difference in this picture?"

"Oh, she's a devotee."

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "but what else?"

"Oh, she has a shaved head."

"Yes." Prabhupāda smiled. "A devotee has a shaved head."

"Do you want me to shave my head?"

"Yes."

Rāmānuja shaved. But within a few days he began growing his beard and hair back. "From now on," Prabhupāda told Acyutānanda, "no more cheap initiations. They have to know something."

Rāmānuja hung on. Prabhupāda wanted Rāmānuja and Acyutānanda to remain in India after his departure and continue to try for the American House in Vṛndāvana. Rāmānuja wrote his own impressions to his friend Mukunda in San Francisco.

Please be advised that we're doing all we can to get him off as soon as possible but this primitive Indian government is putting obstacles in our way. The man who could have given Swamiji clearance for his P-form has just drowned, so the clearance has to be made in Bombay. This is the delay. Here in Calcutta we are having lots of fun addressing different people. Swamiji makes

Acyutānanda and myself give a short speech. I am becoming more and more expert at this. I think that he makes us speak in order to show the audience that we American Vaiṣṇavas are for real. And also he wants everyone to preach Krishna Consciousness... It is very difficult to take care properly of Swamiji's health here. For one thing it is a big thing to serve sweets in India and it is impolite to decline. Also we get all kinds of visitors. We have not been able to go to bed before 11 o'clock and Swamiji automatically wakes at 3. In this respect the people here are very inconsiderate but if Acyutānanda and I ask them to leave they will ask Swamiji if they should and Swamiji of course says no. Anyway his heart beat is a little fast and sometimes it is alarmingly fast, so I suggest that you get a good heart specialist to see him... Please arrange for this doctor and above all make sure that Swamiji gets plenty of rest. You need not restrict visitors too strictly because if the company is good Swamiji seems to enjoy visitors. Please do all you can to get Swamiji's beat to normal again. His chariot needs to be fixed up so that he can remain on this earth for at least another ten years.

* * *

Knowing that Swamiji would soon be returning, the devotees in America began to increase their entreaties, each group asking him to come to their particular city. On November 4 Prabhupāda wrote Mukunda, "As you say that my absence is being felt now surely more deeply than ever, so I also feel to start immediately without waiting." And to Mukunda's wife, Jānakī, he wrote, "Every minute I think of you and as you asked me to go to San Francisco while returning from India, I am trying to fulfill my promise. I am thinking of going directly to San Francisco." At the bottom of the same letter to Mukunda and Jānakī, Acyutānanda added a health report:

Swamiji is looking healthy and living and working regularly, but his pulse rate is generally too fast. Last night it was 95—unusually fast even for him as it generally hovers between 83 and 86.

Prabhupāda decided not to wait any longer on the chance that Mukunda might secure him permanent residency. "I want to return to your country, where there is good air and good water," he told Acyutānanda one day. "Every day we are receiving letters that the devotees want me there. I thought that in my absence they might deteriorate, and I was reluctant to even come to India. But now I see that it is growing. There is need for me to go and supervise the expansion. So I want to go back."

The only impediment now seemed to be a delayed P-form, a clearance from the Bank of India required for an Indian citizen traveling abroad.

I am just ready for starting for America but as you know our competent government is very slow in action. The P-form was submitted almost a month ago, but still it is undergoing red tapism. The visa was granted to me within half an hour. The passage money was deposited within two days but unfortunately the Reserve Bank of India is delaying the matter unnecessarily. I expect the P-form at any moment and as soon as I get it I shall start for your country.

Just to make certain that Swamiji would come first to San Francisco, Mukunda sent a telegram to Calcutta: "SWAMIJI. BRAHMANANDA AND I AGREE YOU START IMMEDIATELY. ADVISE EXACT ARRIVAL DATE. MUKUNDA."

Prabhupāda had planned his route through Tokyo, intending to stop for a day “to probe if there is any possibility of starting a center.” In Tokyo he would let Mukunda know by telephone his arrival time in San Francisco. But three weeks passed while Prabhupāda continued to wait for his P-form.

Meanwhile, he received good news from New York. The Macmillan Company's interest in Bhagavad-gītā was real; the contract was being drawn. Pleased with Brahmānanda, he wrote to him on November 11 explaining his visions for distributing Kṛṣṇa conscious literature.

If publications are there we can work from one center only like New York or San Francisco for propagating our cult all over the world. Let us stick to the publication of BTG more and more nicely and publish some Vedic literatures like Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Chaitanya Charitamrita, etc...

As Prabhupāda's mind turned more to the preaching that awaited him in America, he assessed what he had done so far, what he would do, and the process by which he would do it.

I am not in agreement with Mr. Altman that we are expanding very thinly. In my opinion, a single sincere soul can maintain a center. You know I started the center at 26 2nd Ave. alone. I took the risk of 200.00 dollars per month for Rent. At that time there were no assistants. Mukunda was at that time a friend but there was no responsibility for him for maintaining the center. Gradually Kirtanananda and Hayagrīva joined but they did not take any responsibility. Still I was maintaining the establishment simply depending on Krishna and then Krishna sent me everything—men and money. Similarly, if a sincere soul goes out and opens a center in any part of the world Krishna will help him in all respects. Without being empowered by Krishna, nobody can preach Krishna Consciousness. It is not academic qualification or financial strength which helps in these matters, but it is sincerity of purpose which helps us always. Therefore I wish that you [Brahmānanda] will remain in charge of New York, let Satsvarūpa be in charge of Boston, Let Mukunda be in charge of San Francisco, Let Janardan be in charge of Montreal. Let Nandarani and Dayananda be in charge of Los Angeles. And let Subal das be in charge of Santa Fe. In this way you will follow my example as I did in the beginning at 26 2nd Ave. That is Preaching, cooking, writing, talking, chanting everything one man's work. I never thought about the audience. I was prepared to chant if there were no man to hear me. The principle of chanting is to glorify the Lord and not to attract a crowd. If Krishna hears nicely then he will ask some sincere devotee to gather in such place. Therefore be advised that thousands of centers may be started if we find out a sincere soul for each and every center. We do not require more men to start. If there is one sincere soul that is sufficient to start a new center.

On November 12 Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Kṛṣṇā-devī,

I am coming soon to San Francisco. I shall let you know the exact date some time next week. I am coming over very soon to see you when everything will be adjusted. Hope you are well.

And the health notes from Acyutānanda continued to arrive.

Please tell the devotees out there to take good care of him. It is a very hard task trying to restrain him from overworking himself, but they must be strict. He still has to take his medicines and get his massage every day.

On November 20 Prabhupāda dispatched by boat to New York more than eight hundred copies of the first three volumes of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. And on the next day his P-form finally cleared. Immediately he booked passage on Pan American Airlines and sent a cable informing Mukunda that he would arrive in San Francisco on November 24 at 12:45 P.M.

But again his departure was delayed—this time by a strike by the Communist Party in Calcutta. Businesses closed. Cars, buses, rickshas, and trains stopped running. Riots broke out. There were murders and assassinations. Meanwhile, Prabhupāda remained at the Rādhā-Govinda temple.

My return to your country is already settled. But due to a petty revolution in Calcutta I am not able to leave... Our San Francisco friends may be very anxious because I sent them two telegrams, one informing them of my arrival and the other canceling it. Future arrangements are pending.

Two weeks passed. While waiting in his room for the political strike to end, Prabhupāda received a letter from Umāpati, one of the devotees he had initiated at the first initiation in New York, in September of 1966. Umāpati had given up practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness for half a year, but now he wrote to say he was back. Prabhupāda replied:

It is my duty to deliver you the right thing in right earnestness and it is the duty of the receiver to act in the standard spiritual regulation. When you left us I simply prayed to Krishna for your return to Krishna Consciousness because that was my duty. Any good soul who approaches me once for spiritual enlightenment is supposed to be depending on my responsibility to get him back to Krishna, back to home. The disciple may misunderstand a bona fide spiritual master being obliged to do so under the pressure of Maya's influence. But a bona fide spiritual master never lets go a devotee once accepted. When a disciple misunderstands a bona fide spiritual master, the master regrets for his inability to protect the disciple and sometimes he cries with tears in the eyes. We had an experience while my Guru Maharaja was alive. One of His disciples who accepted sannyas was one day forcibly dragged by his wife. My Guru Maharaj lamented with tears in His eyes saying that He could not save the soul. We should always therefore be careful of being attacked by Maya's influence and the only means of guarantee is to chant Hare Krishna offenselessly.

When Prabhupāda received news of quarreling in the Los Angeles temple he replied to Nandarāṇī,

I know that my presence is very urgently required. Arrangement is already completed and circumstances alone have checked my departure. Please therefore don't be worried. I am coming to your place within a fortnight.

At the end of the first week of December the strike ended, and Śrīla Prabhupāda again booked passage.

You will be pleased to know that I have purchased my ticket for New York via Tokyo and San Francisco. I am starting tomorrow morning at nine thirty. By evening reaching Tokyo via Bangkok and Hong Kong. I shall rest 24 hours in Tokyo and on the 14th at night, I am starting for San Francisco. By local time I am reaching San Francisco on the same day, the 14th at 12:45 p.m. by P.A.A. 846. Yesterday I have sent one telegram to this effect, and I hope I shall reach there safely as

scheduled. I am so glad to learn that Satyabrata and yourself are trying to get the teachings of Lord Caitanya published. You do not know how pleased I am to hear this news. When one book is published I think I have conquered an empire. So try to publish as many books as possible and that will enhance the beauty and prestige of our society. The impersonalist mission has nothing to say substantial but because they have money and have published so many rubbish literatures they have become very cheaply popular. You can just imagine how much powerful our society will become when we have as many substantial literatures published. We should not only publish in English but also in other important languages such as French and German.

When the day for Prabhupāda's departure finally arrived he gave last instructions to Acyutānanda and Rāmānuja.

"Just pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa that I can go to America," he requested Acyutānanda.

"How can I?" Acyutānanda replied. "You'll be leaving me."

"No," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "we'll always remain packed up together if you remember my teachings. If you preach you will become strong, and all these teachings will be in the proper perspective. When we stop our preaching, then everything becomes stagnated, and we lose our life. Even here in India people think that they know everything, but they are wrong. There is no end to hearing about Kṛṣṇa. God is unlimited. So no one can say, 'I know everything about God.' Those who say they know everything about God do not know. So everyone will appreciate you. Do not fear."

Acyutānanda: When I returned to the room after sending off Swamiji and paying my obeisances at the airport, I felt a void. I felt very lonely and rather weak. I returned to the room in front of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, and chanting on my beads I started pacing back and forth. "What will I preach?" The black and white marble floor passed under me. I stepped on the cracks, in between the cracks, and on the black and white marble again and again. Then I realized I wasn't seeing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. So I sat down directly in front and saw the brilliant form of Rādhā-Govindajī, and my eyes filled with tears.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda spent his stopover in Tokyo mostly in going to his hotel and checking into a room, bathing, resting, eating, and returning to the airport the next day in time for his flight to San Francisco. But he did speak with a government secretary, explaining that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was a universal philosophy for reviving a person's original, eternal consciousness. And he explained the crucial need for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in human society. The secretary, however, said he felt certain that the Japanese government wouldn't be able to help a religious movement.

Prabhupāda was annoyed. This supposedly educated man was so ignorant as to mistake Kṛṣṇa consciousness for merely another sectarian religion. Prabhupāda wanted intelligent men to try to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness and understand that the Gītā was actual knowledge, transcendental knowledge, beyond the inferior knowledge of the senses and the mind. But he had his plane to catch. Japan would have to wait.

The passengers and flight crew saw Prabhupāda as an elderly Indian man dressed in saffron robes. The stewardesses weren't sure at first whether he spoke English, but when he asked them for fruits they saw that he could and that he was a kind gentleman. He was quiet, putting on his glasses and reading from an old book of Indian scripture for hours at a time, or moving his lips in prayer while fingering Indian prayer beads in a cloth pouch, or sometimes resting beneath a blanket, his eyes shut.

No one knew or bothered to inquire into what he was doing. They didn't know that anxious young hearts were awaiting him in San Francisco, or that the Macmillan Company in New York wanted to publish his English translation of Bhagavad-gītā, or that he had spiritual centers in two countries, with plans for expansion all over the world. Prabhupāda sat patiently, chanting often, his hand in his bead bag, depending on Kṛṣṇa as the hours passed.

After a ten-hour flight the plane landed in San Francisco. Standing with hundreds of other passengers, Prabhupāda gradually made his way to the exit. Down the long attached tunnel, even before he reached the terminal building, he could see Govinda dāsī and a few other disciples smiling and waving on the other side of a glass partition. As he entered the terminal building he moved towards the glass, and his disciples dropped to their knees, offering obeisances. As they raised their heads he smiled and continued walking down the corridor while they walked alongside, only the glass partition separating them. Then they disappeared from his view as he walked down the stairway towards immigration and customs.

The downstairs area was also glassed in, and Prabhupāda could see more than fifty devotees and friends waiting eagerly. As they again caught sight of him, they cried out as a group, "Hare Kṛṣṇa!"

Swamiji looked wonderful to them, tanned from his six months in India, younger, and more spritely. He smiled and triumphantly held up his hands in greeting. Devotees were crying in happiness.

As Prabhupāda stood in line at the customs inspection point, he could hear the devotees' kīrtana, the glass walls only partially masking the sound. The customs officials ignored the chanting, although the connection between the saffron-robed passenger and the joyful chanters was not hard to see.

Śrīla Prabhupāda waited in line, glancing now and then at his chanting disciples. Since he had already sent ahead the eight hundred books and several crates of musical instruments, he had only one suitcase to place on the table before the inspector. Methodically the inspector went through the contents: cotton sārīs for the girls, silk garlands for the Jagannātha deities, karatālas, saffron dhotīs and kurtās, a coconut grater, and little bottles of Āyur Vedic medicine.

"What are these?" the inspector probed. The little bottles looked strange, and he called for another inspector. A delay. Swamiji's disciples became perturbed by the petty-minded customs inspectors' poking through Swamiji's things, now opening the tightly corked bottles, sniffing and checking the contents.

The inspectors seemed satisfied. Prabhupāda tried to close his suitcase, but he couldn't work the zipper. Another delay. The devotees, still anxiously chanting, watched as Swamiji, with the help of the gentleman behind him, managed to zip his suitcase closed.

Swamiji walked towards the glass doors. The devotees began chanting madly. As he stepped through the door a devotee blew a conchshell that resounded loudly throughout the hall. Devotees garlanded him, and everyone pressed in, handing him flowers. He entered their midst as a beloved father enters and reciprocates the embrace of his loving children.

SPL 29: Unlimited Opportunity, Limited Time

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Unlimited Opportunity,

Limited Time

= Montreal

August 1968

Srīla Prabhupāda was in his room, speaking with several disciples. "So, Annapūrṇā, you have got some news?" he asked. Annapūrṇā was a young British girl. A few months ago her father had written from England that he might be able to provide a house if some devotees came there.

"Yes," she replied.

"So, what is our next program?" She was reticent. "That letter from your father is encouraging?"

"Yes, he encourages me. But he says he can't provide any place if we come there."

Prabhupāda looked disappointed. "That's all right. It is up to Kṛṣṇa. When we go to someone to preach, we have to stand before them with folded hands, with all humility: "My dear sir, please take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.'"

"Prabhupāda?" Pradyumna spoke up. "I was reading a book by this big atheist swami."

"Hmm?"

"There are some letters in the back of the book, and I was looking at them..."

"Atheist swami's book," Prabhupāda said, "we have nothing to do with."

"I wasn't looking at his philosophy," Pradyumna explained. "I was just looking at the techniques he used when he was in America. He wanted to go to Europe, so he had a man, a rich benefactor, who went on a six-week tour of France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and then back,

arranging lectures. That's how he did most of his tour. He had one or two influential people, and they arranged everything. And the lectures were arranged, and the society..."

"So, you can arrange like that?" Prabhupāda asked.

"I was thinking that there would be a Royal Asiatic Society in London. I think Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda was a member of that."

"But where is Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda's saṅga [association]?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Well," Pradyumna continued, "still there may be some people you could open correspondence with. They might be interested in sponsoring you."

"Is there anything about Kṛṣṇa in that swami's speech?" Prabhupāda asked.

"No."

Prabhupāda sat thoughtfully. In England he would have no place to stay. Pradyumna might talk of influential persons traveling ahead and making all the arrangements, but where were such persons? Here was a shy girl who could barely speak up, whose father would not help, and Pradyumna reading an atheist swami and talking of a Royal Asiatic Society—but nothing practical. Prabhupāda had plans, though. He had asked Mukunda and Śyāmasundara to go to London and try to establish an ISKCON center. They had agreed and would be arriving in Montreal from San Francisco in a few days.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Prabhupāda's own spiritual master, had wanted Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Europe. During the 1930s he had sent his most experienced sannyāsīs to London, but they had returned, nothing accomplished. It wasn't possible to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the mlecchas, they had complained. Europeans couldn't sit long enough to hear the Vaiṣṇava philosophy. One of the sannyāsīs had met Lord Zetland, who had inquired curiously, "Swamiji, can you make me a brāhmaṇa?" The sannyāsī had assured Lord Zetland he could, certainly, if Zetland would give up meat-eating, intoxication, gambling, and illicit sex. "Impossible!" Lord Zetland had replied. And the sannyāsīs had accepted this response as the standard for all Europeans. The sannyāsīs had returned to India; Vaiṣṇavism could never take hold in the West. Prabhupāda had faith that his disciples would succeed; they would help him establish ISKCON centers in Europe, just as they had in North America. Certainly such success would greatly please Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Prabhupāda told of a man who found a gourd lying on the road and picked it up and then found a stick and a wire and picked them up. In themselves, the three parts were useless. But by putting the gourd, the stick, and the wire together, the man made a vīṇā and began to play beautiful music. Similarly, Prabhupāda had come to the West and found some rejected youths lying here and there, and he himself had been rejected by the people of New York City; but by Kṛṣṇa's grace the combination had become successful. If his disciples remained sincere and followed his orders, they would succeed in Europe.

Three married couples—Mukunda and Jānakī, Śyāmasundara and Mālātī (with their infant daughter, Sarasvatī), and Guru dāsa and Yamunā—arrived in Montreal, eager to travel to London.

These three couples had begun the temple in San Francisco, where they had had close association with Śrīla Prabhupāda. They had helped Prabhupāda introduce kīrtana, prasādam, and Ratha-yātrā among the hippies of Haight-Ashbury. Now they were eager to help him introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness in London.

Prabhupāda asked the three couples to remain with him in Montreal for a week or two, so that he could train them to perform kīrtana expertly. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa was not a theatrical performance but an act of devotion, properly conducted only by pure devotees—not by professional musicians. Yet if Prabhupāda's disciples became proficient in their singing, Londoners would better appreciate Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The thought of these devotees preaching in England made Prabhupāda ecstatic. With their kīrtana they would become more popular than the yogīs, with their gymnastics and impersonal meditation. As the London program became a tangible fact, Prabhupāda began to reveal more plans. Prabhupāda already seemed to have hundreds of detailed plans for implementing Kṛṣṇa consciousness around the world—he only needed willing helpers.

In the daily kīrtana rehearsals, Prabhupāda taught the devotees to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and other devotional songs, beginning with a slow tempo and building gradually. He would regularly interrupt and have them begin again. Listening carefully as Yamunā led the chanting, Prabhupāda would stop her at times to correct her Sanskrit pronunciation.

After two weeks in Montreal, the London party came together for a final meeting with Prabhupāda. He was sending them to start a center in London to fulfill his spiritual master's dream. The sannyāsīs Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had sent to London, Prabhupāda told them, had lectured in a few places, posed for photos with lords and ladies, and then returned to India. But Prabhupāda wanted his disciples to go out boldly, chant the holy name, and attract others to chant.

Lord Caitanya had personally used this method while touring South India. Caitanya-caritāmṛta describes that whoever saw Lord Caitanya became ecstatic in love of God; then that ecstatic person would chant the holy name and ask others to chant; and when they saw that person, they too would become ecstatic. Thus the waves of ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa would increase.

Prabhupāda predicted that when the devotees chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, the people of London would hear the mantra, become devotees, and then enlighten others. Kṛṣṇa consciousness would grow. The only requirement was that the chanting be done purely, without any material motivation. Prabhupāda's enthusiasm was contagious, and as he spoke he filled his disciples with the same contagious enthusiasm.

When Mukunda asked Prabhupāda if he had any specific instructions, Prabhupāda replied with a story. In his youth, he had once seen a movie of Charlie Chaplin. The setting was a formal ball held outdoors, and off from the main dance arena were lanes with benches where couples sat. Some mischievous boys had plastered glue on one of the benches, and a young man and his girl friend came and sat down. "When the young man got up"—Prabhupāda laughed as he told the story—"his tails tore up the middle."

Prabhupāda told how the couple had returned to the dance, unaware of what had happened. But now they drew stares from the other dancers. Wondering why he was suddenly attracting so much attention, the young man went into the dressing room and saw in the mirror his ripped coattails. Deliberately, he then tore his coat all the way up to the collar, returned to his partner, and began dancing exuberantly.

Then another man joined, ripping his own coattails and dancing with his partner, as if to compete with the first couple. One by one, the other dancers followed, ripping their coattails and dancing with abandon.

By the conclusion of the story, the devotees in Prabhupāda's room were all laughing uproariously. But finally their laughter subsided and the meeting ended. Not until the devotees were already at the airport did Mukunda, talking with Śyāmasundara, begin to appreciate and marvel at how expertly Prabhupāda had answered his question. By their bold, enthusiastic, confident preaching, they would attract people. Not everyone would immediately "join in the dancing," as had the people in the Charlie Chaplin film; the devotees might even be considered crazy at first. But they would be offering Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the highest and rarest gift, and intelligent people would gradually appreciate this, even if at first they scoffed.

By Śrīla Prabhupāda's order, his London-bound disciples, holding kīrtana in public, would present a profile quite different from the reserved profile of his sannyāsī Godbrothers. His Godbrothers had imitated the British ways; but Prabhupāda wanted the British to imitate the Vaiṣṇavas. To appear in the streets of London with shaven heads and dhotīs would require boldness. But it would be exciting to chant, carrying out the order of Lord Caitanya. And the people would follow—gradually, but definitely. It was the will of Lord Caitanya.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda's visit to Montreal took place early in the summer of 1968, six months after his return to America. In India, from July to December of 1967, he had recovered his health, and on December 14 he had returned to San Francisco. After a few weeks he had gone to Los Angeles, where a small group of disciples had opened a storefront temple in a middle-class black and Hispanic neighborhood. The storefront was bare and the location secluded. Prabhupāda had stayed there two months, delivering lectures, holding kīrtanas, and giving strength and inspiration to his disciples. Although a buzzing in his head had made working difficult, he had found the warm climate and sunshine agreeable and had continued to translate Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, dictating tapes and sending them to Boston for typing.

A reporter from Life had come to Śrīla Prabhupāda's apartment and interviewed him for an upcoming Life feature, "The Year of the Guru."

When the story had appeared it had mixed Śrīla Prabhupāda and his movement with coverage of other gurus. Although the article had carried a large color photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda and favorably described a reporter's visit to the New York ISKCON center, Prabhupāda had said that being grouped with gurus who taught concoctions of yoga and meditation was not good.

In May, a few months after leaving Los Angeles, Prabhupāda had paid a first visit to his ISKCON center in Boston. There also he had found a few disciples based in a small storefront. He had lectured at many of the local universities, including Harvard and M.I.T. At M.I.T., addressing a gathering of students and faculty, he had challenged, "Where in this university is there a department to teach scientifically the difference between a living body and a dead body?" The most fundamental science, the science of the living soul, was not being taught.

After Boston, Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to Montreal. And after three months in Montreal, Prabhupāda flew to Seattle, where he stayed for one month. Then he briefly visited Santa Fe, New Mexico, where the ISKCON center was a tiny, isolated storefront.

Prabhupāda's reasons for traveling from center to center were to train and convince each disciple and to speak with newcomers. Many young people came to hear, but Prabhupāda found the majority already ruined by illicit sex and drugs. They were "rich men's sons," but they had become hippies, wandering the streets. By Kṛṣṇa's grace, now some of them were being saved.

Even while recuperating in India, Prabhupāda had always thought of returning to America to continue his movement. The Indians had seemed interested only in sense gratification, like that of the Americans. But many American youths, disillusioned with their fathers' wealth, were not going to the skyscrapers or to their fathers' businesses. As Prabhupāda had seen from his stay in New York City and San Francisco, thousands of youths were seeking an alternative to materialism. Frustrated, they were ripe for spiritual knowledge.

The devotees, still neophytes, knew nothing of spiritual life and in most cases very little of material life. But because they were sincerely taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda was confident that their shortcomings would not prevent their spiritual progress. Although naturally beautiful, these Western youths were now dirty and morose; their beauty had become covered. But the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa was reviving them, Prabhupāda said, just as the monsoon revives the land of Vṛndāvana, making it fresh and verdant. And as the Vṛndāvana peacocks sometimes dance jubilantly, so the devotees, having shed their material bonds, were now ecstatically dancing and chanting the holy names. When a reporter asked Prabhupāda if his disciples were hippies, Prabhupāda replied, "No, we are not hippies. We are happies."

More than being a visiting lecturer or a formal guide, Śrīla Prabhupāda was the spiritual father of his disciples. They accepted him as their real father, and he found them devoted and affectionate, far more than his own family had been. These young American boys and girls—"the flower of your country," Prabhupāda called them—had received the blessing of Lord Caitanya and were delivering that blessing to their countrymen. Prabhupāda said it was up to his American disciples to save their country. He was giving them the method, but they would have to implement it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda loved his disciples, and they loved him. Out of love, he was giving them the greatest treasure, and out of love they were following his instructions. This was the essence of spiritual life. On the basis of this love, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would grow. Not surprisingly, some disciples had fallen away to their former, materialistic way of living. But Prabhupāda sought those sincere souls who would stay. That was the important thing, he said. One moon is more valuable than many stars; so even a few sincere workers would accomplish wonderful

things. The sincere and intelligent would stay, and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu would empower them to carry out His desires for distributing love of Kṛṣṇa. In this way, the devotees' lives would become perfect. Many disciples, in fact, already felt this happening. Kṛṣṇa consciousness worked because they sincerely practiced it and because Śrīla Prabhupāda carefully and patiently tended the growing plants of transcendental loving service he had planted in their hearts.

Los Angeles

October 1968

Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to find the devotees living and worshiping in an exciting location on Hollywood Boulevard. A large saṅkīrtana party, organized by his disciple Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, would chant Hare Kṛṣṇa on the streets all day and sell Back to Godhead magazines in larger quantities than ever before—as many as two hundred magazines a day, with a collection of over one hundred dollars.

Then one day, shortly after Prabhupāda's arrival, the landlord evicted the devotees from their place on Hollywood Boulevard. With no temple the devotees moved to scattered locations throughout the city. As many evenings as possible, however, they would all gather in someone's garage, lent to them for the evening, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with them and lecture.

Then Prabhupāda rented a former Christian church on La Cienega Boulevard. He introduced a more regulated Deity worship and an increased Sunday love feast. Each week would bring a new, specially planned festival with a big feast and hundreds of guests. These new programs in Los Angeles encouraged Prabhupāda, and he wanted to see them introduced in ISKCON centers throughout the world.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda was planning to go to England. But first he wanted to visit his farm project in West Virginia, and he had also been promising the devotees in San Francisco he would attend their Ratha-yātrā festival in July. This traveling to establish and expand his ISKCON was alone enough to keep him busy; yet he was also always meditating on his work of translating and commenting on Vedic literatures.

In L.A. during December, Śrīla Prabhupāda had begun *The Nectar of Devotion*, a summary study of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. The *Nectar of Devotion* would be a handbook for his disciples, elaborately explaining the science and practice of bhakti-yoga. Simultaneous with *The Nectar of Devotion*, he had also begun *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*, a summary study of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's Tenth Canto. Visiting the temple only on Sundays, he had spent most of his time at his small rented house on the outskirts of Beverly Hills, where he worked intensely on his two major literary projects.

Prabhupāda's most ambitious literary undertaking, the completion of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, was to be no less than sixty volumes. He had begun in India in 1959, and all along he had been aware that

he was attempting a gigantic task at an advanced age. Now Kṛṣṇa was giving him opportunities both for writing Vedic literatures and for traveling, and he was working at an amazing pace.

The force driving Prabhupāda was the desire of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. As for how much time he had remaining to execute his mission—that was in Kṛṣṇa's hands. Everything was up to Kṛṣṇa: "If Kṛṣṇa wants to kill you, no one can save you; and if Kṛṣṇa wants to save you, no one can kill you." Yet although Prabhupāda was always in transcendental consciousness, beyond the effects of old age, he was aware that he didn't have many more years left. All along he had had the vision of a spiritual movement for all nations and cultures, and to establish this he was racing against time.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's mood of urgency was the natural mood of the Vaiṣṇava preacher—an ambition to engage everyone in loving service to Kṛṣṇa. Without Kṛṣṇa consciousness the bewildered, conditioned souls of Kali-yuga were all heading for the horrible consequences of their sinful lives. Prabhupāda's sense of urgency, therefore, was an expression of his compassion. He wanted to save the gross materialists, who were blind to the existence of the soul. If they wasted their human life, they would suffer millions of years before getting another chance to awaken their Kṛṣṇa consciousness and go back to Godhead.

The heart attack Prabhupāda had endured in 1967 had accelerated his mood of urgency. Although before the heart attack he had often worked like a young man and played the drum for hours, now Kṛṣṇa's warning was clear. The heart attack was to have been the time of his death, Prabhupāda had said, but because his disciples had prayed, "Our master has not finished his work. Please protect him," Kṛṣṇa had spared him. Similarly, on the boat to America in 1965 his heart had almost failed. But then also Kṛṣṇa had saved his life.

The scope of Prabhupāda's work was enormous; even with many years and good health he could never finish. Prabhupāda saw that in future generations many people would come forward to help, and thus, by a combined effort, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would continue to check the forces of Kali-yuga and save the entire world. Caitanya Mahāprabhu had predicted this, and Prabhupāda knew that it must come to pass. But the task of erecting the framework for this universal effort rested on Prabhupāda alone. And he worked tirelessly, knowing that unless he established a complete foundation the entire mission might later collapse.

Beginning with Prabhupāda's first success in New York City in 1966, Kṛṣṇa had shown unlimited opportunities for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But how much time was there? Only Kṛṣṇa could say; it was up to Him. Prabhupāda remained ever mindful of the vast scope of his mission and the ever-narrowing span of time he had in which to complete it. "I am an old man," he often told his disciples. "I could pass away at any moment."

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda would receive several letters a week from the devotees in London. It was now December 1968—the devotees had been in London four months—and still they had no temple, nor even a place where they could live and worship together. Mostly they had been visiting Hindu families, holding kīrtana and sharing prasādam. Śrīla Prabhupāda had encouraged this, but after

hearing a few reports he decided the program was stagnant. The devotees should not expect much from the Hindus, he said. "They have become hodgepodge due to so many years of subjugation by foreigners and have lost their own culture... I am concerned to preach this gospel amongst the Europeans and Americans."

The devotees were jolted, but they knew Prabhupāda was right. Determined to change their tactics, they immediately began lecturing at colleges and universities and chanting in the streets. They were preaching to the British, and it felt right. When they wrote to Prabhupāda that although they had accomplished little they were "planting seeds," Prabhupāda replied,

Regarding your analogy of sowing Krishna Consciousness seeds, I may inform you that there is a Bengali proverb—Sabure Meoya Phale. This means that fruits like chestnuts and pomegranates, or similar other valuable fruits and nuts take some time to be fructified. So any good thing comes into our possession after hard struggle and endeavor. So Krishna Consciousness is the greatest of all good fruits. We must therefore have necessary endurance and enthusiasm to get the result. We shall never be disappointed when things are presented in reversed order. Anyway, your honest labor is now coming to be fructified. Always depend upon Krishna and go on working with enthusiasm, patience and conviction.

* * *

Through the spring and summer of 1969, Prabhupāda continued touring his American ISKCON centers. From Los Angeles he had sent Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī, a young married couple, to Hawaii; and on their invitation that he come during the mango season, he joined them. But when he got there in March he found that it was not mango season and that his disciples had accomplished little. They had taken jobs and were working full time just to support themselves.

New York City

April 9, 1969

Prabhupāda traveled to New York City, the birthplace of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness society, where his movement had been growing for nearly three years. Although the center was established and his books were being distributed, he still had to visit to strengthen the devotees. His presence gave them determination and courage. For seven months they had carried on without his personal touch, but his visits—when he would sit in his room and reciprocate warmly with them—were vital. Nothing could equal these intimate meetings.

Many devotees, new and old, crowded into Prabhupāda's apartment at 26 Second Avenue. "There was one reporter for the Honolulu Advertiser," Prabhupāda said, "—he was putting questions to me. And then he wrote an article: 'The swami is a small man, but he is delivering a great message.' That is true. I am small. But the message—that is not small."

Brahmānanda showed Prabhupāda a globe with markers representing ISKCON centers. "Now there is one in North Carolina," Brahmānanda said.

"Then it becomes fifteen?" Prabhupāda asked. He was smiling and looking directly from one devotee to another. "I want each of you to go and start a center. What is the difficulty? Take one mṛdaṅga. Then another person will come and join you—he will take karatālas. When I came here, Brahmānanda and Acyutānanda were dancing. And after chanting, hundreds of men will come to your storefront and enjoy chanting and dancing."

"The girls also?" Rukmiṇī asked.

"There is no harm," Prabhupāda said. "Kṛṣṇa does not make distinction—female dress or male dress. I mean to say, the female body is weaker, but spiritually the body does not matter. In the absence of Lord Nityānanda, His wife, Jāhnavī devī, was preaching. First you must understand the philosophy. You must be prepared to answer questions. Kṛṣṇa will give you intelligence. Just like I was not prepared to answer all these questions, but Kṛṣṇa gives intelligence."

After eight days in his New York City home, Prabhupāda went to Buffalo. At State University of New York at Buffalo, Rūpānuga was teaching an accredited course in Kṛṣṇa yoga with some sixty students enrolled, regularly chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on beads. Prabhupāda stayed for a few days, lecturing and initiating disciples. Then he went to Boston for more initiations and several marriages.

Columbus, Ohio

May 9, 1969

The devotees had arranged for Prabhupāda and Allen Ginsberg to chant onstage at Ohio State University.

Allen had been a friend of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement from its first days on the Lower East Side. Shortly after Prabhupāda's arrival in Columbus, he stopped by Prabhupāda's house and discussed philosophy with Prabhupāda for several hours. Allen was friendly with Prabhupāda, as always. But he doubted whether Kṛṣṇa consciousness could become popular in America. "The need," he said, "is for a large, single, unifying religious movement in America."

"So here is Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda replied, "—all-attractive. Now you can say, 'Why shall I accept Kṛṣṇa?' But since you ask for a unifying element, then I say, 'Here is Kṛṣṇa.' Now you can analyze: Why should you accept Kṛṣṇa? And I shall reply, 'Why you shall not?' Whatever you want or expect from the Supreme or Unifying, everything is there in Kṛṣṇa."

If Prabhupāda wanted his movement popularized, Allen suggested, he should consider omitting many of the sectarian Hindu aspects, such as the dress, the food, and the Sanskrit.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda replied, was not sectarian or Hindu. Lord Caitanya had said that a person could chant any name of God—but one must chant. As for the food, Prabhupāda explained that any food was acceptable as long as it was purely vegetarian. And dress—there was no stricture that Americans wear robes and shave their heads. The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, Prabhupāda added, was a natural sound, not foreign.

Allen objected. The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra sounded foreign; perhaps they should think of an alternative, more American mantra.

"This is going on," Prabhupāda replied. "Some people are inclined to one thing and some to others. And it will go on until the end of creation. But our position is that we are searching after the center. And here is the center."

At Ohio State's Hitchcock Hall a thousand students occupied the seats, and a thousand more crowded the aisles and stage. The program began with a kīrtana led by Allen Ginsberg. Allen then introduced Prabhupāda, and Prabhupāda lectured. When Prabhupāda began the second and final kīrtana of the evening, the students responded wildly. Those seated stood and danced, some jumping in their seats, and those in the aisles and on the stage also joined in. Amid the thunderous kīrtana of nearly two thousand voices, Prabhupāda began to dance, jumping up and down on the speaker's dais, his hands raised high. He threw flowers from his garland, and the students scrambled for them. The wildly ecstatic kīrtana continued for almost an hour, and then Prabhupāda brought it to a close.

Afterward hundreds of students crowded close around Prabhupāda, asking him questions. Many students continued to chant as they left the hall, and some left crying from the new sensations of spiritual happiness. The next day the ecstatic night of chanting at Hitchcock Hall was the talk of the campus. Prabhupāda was pleased with the evening, and he described the event in a letter to devotees in Los Angeles:

Yesterday, at the Ohio State University we had a tremendous meeting, and nearly two thousand students were dancing, clapping and chanting along with us. So it is clear that the student community has a nice potential for accepting this philosophy.

* * *

New Vrindaban

May 21, 1969

Accompanied by Kīrtanānanda Swami and Hayagrīva, Prabhupāda then traveled from Columbus to the New Vrindaban farm project in the hills of West Virginia. When their car got stuck in a neighbor's garden near the entrance to the property, Prabhupāda decided to walk the final two miles along the muddy access road that led to the farm. The road soon ended, however, and Prabhupāda and his two guides picked up a footpath, entering the dense forest.

The mid-May trees were still coming into foliage, and the sunlight broke through the branches to a carpet of brilliant purple phlox. Prabhupāda walked quickly ahead of Kīrtanānanda Swami and Hayagrīva, who hurried to keep up. A winding creek repeatedly crossed the path, and Prabhupāda would cross by stepping from stone to stone. The road, he said, would not be difficult to travel by ox cart; the forest was like a jungle, just as he had expected and wanted.

For the past year, Prabhupāda had corresponded with Kīrtanānanda Swami and Hayagrīva concerning New Vrindaban, and this correspondence had established the direction for Kṛṣṇa conscious country living. Prabhupāda had said he wanted the community based on Vedic ideals, everyone living simply, keeping cows, and working the land. The devotees would have to develop these ideas gradually; it would take time. But even in the beginning the keynote should be “simple living and high thinking.” Because the community would remain completely aloof from the city, it would at first appear inconvenient and austere. But life would be peaceful, free from the anxieties of the artificial urban society based on hard work for sense gratification. And most important, the members of such a community would be serving Kṛṣṇa and chanting His name.

Prabhupāda spoke little, making his way along the path as if at his own home. They stopped beside the creek, and Prabhupāda sat down on a blanket Kīrtanānanda Swami and Hayagrīva spread for him on the grass. “We are stopping for Kīrtanānanda,” Prabhupāda said. “He is tired.” Prabhupāda and his party drank water from the creek, rested briefly, and then continued.

As they rounded a curve in the road, Prabhupāda could see a clearing on the ridge ahead. A small frame house and a barn stood at the lower end of the ridge. These two ancient structures, Hayagrīva explained, were the only buildings on New Vrindaban's 120 acres. As no vehicles traveled here, the paths were overrun with high grass. A willow spread its branches close by the old house. The settlement was the picture of undisturbed primitive life.

Prabhupāda liked the simple life at New Vrindaban, and whatever simple thing the devotees offered him he accepted with satisfaction. They served him freshly ground wheat cereal cooked in milk, and he said it was wonderful. When he saw the kitchen's dirt floor covered with cow dung, he approved, saying it was just like in an Indian village.

Prabhupāda also liked his room in the attic, directly above the temple room. He brought out the small Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities he had been traveling with for the last month and a half and had his servant, Devānanda, improvise an altar on a small table to one side of the room. Arranging his two trunks as a desk and placing a picture of his spiritual master on one of the trunks, Prabhupāda immediately resumed his usual schedule.

He would take his late-morning massage sitting outside and then bathe with warm water in an improvised outdoor shower stall. Kīrtanānanda Swami prepared Prabhupāda's usual lunch of dāl, rice, and capātīs— plus some local pokeweed. The previous summer, Kīrtanānanda Swami and Hayagrīva had picked and canned blackberries, which they now served Prabhupāda as blackberry chutney. The capātīs were from freshly milled whole wheat, and everything was cooked over a wood fire. The best fuel for cooking, Prabhupāda said, was cow dung; wood was second, gas third, and electricity last.

Prabhupāda spent much of the day out of doors, under a persimmon tree about a hundred feet from the house. There he would sit and read at a low table one of the men had built. Often he would look up from his reading and gaze across the deep valley to the distant ridge, where the forest met the sky.

In the late afternoon, devotees would gather under the persimmon tree with Prabhupāda, sitting and talking with him until after sunset. They saw Prabhupāda's living with them as a practical demonstration of New Vrindaban's importance; if he, the greatest devotee, could be satisfied living simply and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in this backwoods setting, then they should follow his example.

Comparing New Vrindaban to the Vṛndāvana in India, Prabhupāda said that New Vrindaban was in some ways better, since Vṛndāvana, India, was now congested with worldly men. Five hundred years ago the Gosvāmī followers of Lord Caitanya had excavated the sites of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana, and only pure devotees had lived there. But in recent years Vṛndāvana had become a place for materialists and impersonalists. New Vrindaban, however, should admit only the spiritually inclined. In Vedic society, Prabhupāda said, everyone had been satisfied to live like this, in a small village beside a river. Factories were unnecessary. Prabhupāda wanted this Vedic way of life for the entire world, and New Vrindaban could serve as a model for the benefit of the masses.

New Vrindaban had no phone, and mail had to be fetched by a two-mile walk. In this, Prabhupāda said, New Vrindaban was like Vṛndāvana, India—both Vṛndāvanas lacked in modern amenities. This “difficulty,” however, coupled well with the Vaiṣṇava philosophy that modern amenities were not worth the trouble required to get them. A devotee, accepting whatever nature provides, spends his time and energy in spiritual life.

New Vrindaban's only cow was a black and white crossbreed named Kāliya, and Prabhupāda would drink a little of her milk morning, noon, and night. “I haven't tasted milk like this in sixty-five years,” he said. One day, he predicted, New Vrindaban would have many cows, and their udders would be so full that the dripping milk would muddy the pastures. Although people in the West were blind to their great sin of cow slaughter and its grievous karmic reactions, he said, New Vrindaban would demonstrate to the world the social, moral, and economic advantages of protecting the cow and utilizing her milk, rather than killing her and eating her flesh.

Prabhupāda wanted the New Vrindaban devotees to build cottages. He wanted many buildings, even if at first they were primitive, and he gave a plan for a simple structure of baked mud. He also wanted a Kṛṣṇa conscious school, and the country, he said, would be the best place for it. “The city is made by man, and the country is made by God,” Prabhupāda said, paraphrasing the British poet Cowper. The young students should learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, and at the same time they should become pure devotees. In their play they could imitate the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends, with one child massaging Kṛṣṇa, another wrestling with Kṛṣṇa—just as in the spiritual world. The women in New Vrindaban, Prabhupāda said, should care for the children, clean the temple, cook for the Deities, and churn butter.

He had many plans for New Vrindaban, and he was giving only idea seeds, with few details. “You develop it to your heart's content,” he told Kīrtanānanda Swami. An ideal Vedic community with the members producing all their own food and necessities was what Prabhupāda wanted. Unless the devotees at New Vrindaban could become self-sufficient, he said, there was no use in their occupying such a big piece of land.

Even before Prabhupāda's visit to New Vrindaban, he had requested Kīrtanānanda Swami and Hayagrīva to plan for seven temples on the property. These seven temples should be named after

the major temples of old Vṛndāvana: Madana-Mohana, Govindajī, Gopīnātha, Rādhā-Dāmodara, Rādhā-ramaṇa, Śyāmasundara, and Rādhā-Gokulānanda. Prabhupāda said he would personally secure Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities for each temple.

It was inevitable that Prabhupāda leave New Vrindaban; letters from London, Los Angeles, and San Francisco compelled him to travel. On the day of his departure, the New Vrindaban devotees teased him, saying he couldn't go. Kīrtanānanda Swami went so far as to say they would block his way on the road. But Prabhupāda corrected him, "You can't do that to the spiritual master."

Accompanied by Kīrtanānanda Swami and the New Vrindaban devotees, Prabhupāda walked along the forest path. The New Vrindaban countryside was verdant, the summer air hot and moist. Prabhupāda was silent. He had come here to encourage his disciples, and he himself had also become encouraged. Here was simple village life as Kṛṣṇa Himself had lived it, depending on the land and the cow. That cow Kāliya had given such nice milk. New Vrindaban's cows were not ordinary; they knew they would not be killed. So far only a few devotees were here, but by Kṛṣṇa's grace more would come.

Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda Swami walked together along the forest path, saying little, but their mutual understanding was deep. Prabhupāda hadn't given him many specific instructions: a few words while sitting or walking together outdoors, a gesture, a facial expression of pleasure or concern. Kīrtanānanda Swami could understand, however, that New Vrindaban was very dear to his spiritual master and should become dear to him also. Prabhupāda assured him that because the devotees of New Vrindaban were centered on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, serving the Deities, and protecting the cows, Kṛṣṇa would bless them with success. The community was already successful, and Kṛṣṇa would continue to protect the devotees against all impediments and difficulties.

At the end of the two-mile walk, Prabhupāda, surrounded by his followers, stood beside the car that was to take him to the airport in Pittsburgh, from where he would fly to Los Angeles. His suitcases, which had come out on a horse-drawn cart, were loaded into the car's luggage compartment, and Prabhupāda got in the back seat. Amid cries of "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" and "Prabhupāda!" the car pulled out onto the country highway, and Prabhupāda continued chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on his beads.

* * *

Prabhupāda had been hearing regularly from his six disciples in London. Having little money and living as separate couples in different parts of the city, they found their greatest inspiration in Prabhupāda's letters. They would repeatedly read his instructions and dream of when he would one day visit them in London. Although in San Francisco Kṛṣṇa consciousness had been fun for the three couples, in England it was becoming more and more difficult. The devotees, being foreigners, were not allowed to earn a salary, and except for a few contacts they knew no one. Although unable to live together, they were trying to maintain their morale and Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Yamunā: I had to move to a Jamaican ghetto, the top floor of one of the buildings. It was awful. Day after day after day I would sit and listen to a tape of Prabhupāda singing. It was a beautiful tape he had just done in Los Angeles. And I would pray to him, "Please come. Please come."

Mukunda: Letters—that's what kept us alive. Prabhupāda would write and say, "I am coming." Two or three times he wrote to say, "I am coming by March." And we would write back and say we wanted to get a place first. We really felt it wouldn't be right for him to come unless we had a place first. He wrote a letter to my wife: "I was planning to come by March, but your husband is not allowing me. What can I do?"

The devotees in London had not seen Prabhupāda in four months, and still there was no date set for his visit. Although they sometimes became discouraged and talked of going back to America, they persevered. Prabhupāda had promised he would come when they got a temple, and that promise helped them remember that they were personally serving him. They felt that he was doing the work and they were his assistants. His absence was only external. By his instructions, whether written, spoken, or remembered in the heart, he was always with them. He was constantly directing them.

While trying out various schemes to popularize Kṛṣṇa consciousness in London, Śyāmasundara arranged for a program to which he invited many of London's prominent citizens. About one hundred people responded to Śyāmasundara's formal invitation—one member of Parliament, a few government officials, but mostly young people.

The devotees served a feast and showed a film of Śrīla Prabhupāda walking by Stowe Lake in Golden Gate Park. Prabhupāda had sent a tape recording specifically for the evening, and the devotees highlighted it as the evening's special attraction, even though they hadn't had time to hear it in advance. Guru dāsa started the tape, and suddenly there was Prabhupāda's voice.

"Ladies and gentlemen, please accept my greetings in the happy year of 1969, and blessings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of God head, for your kindly participating in this happy meeting of Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Although Prabhupāda had recorded the tape in the quiet of his room in Los Angeles, the devotees were astonished to feel Prabhupāda's direct presence, preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the English.

"Lord Caitanya informed us that the absolute Supreme Personality of Godhead can descend in transcendental sound vibration, and thus when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra offenselessly we immediately contact Kṛṣṇa and His internal energy. Thus we become immediately purified from all dirty things in our heart."

The guests sat listening politely as Prabhupāda described the soul's travail of transmigrating from body to body and the path of the soul's liberation through chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was "transcendentally colorful and full of transcendental pleasure." Chanting could be done anywhere—on the street, in the park, or at home. Prabhupāda concluded his talk.

"But to assemble and sit together we require a place for congregation. Therefore a temple of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is required to be established in various centers in the world,

irrespective of the particular country's culture, philosophy, and religion. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so universal and perfect that it can appeal to everyone, irrespective of his position. Therefore I fervently appeal to you all present in this meeting to extend your cooperation for successful execution of this great movement. Thanking you once more."

There was a pause, and then Prabhupāda began playing the harmonium and singing Hare Kṛṣṇa. Afterward he again spoke.

"My disciples in London have very eagerly asked me to visit there, and I am also very anxious to see you all. So as soon as there is opportunity, I shall go with my saṅkīrtana party, who are now engaged in Los Angeles. And that will be a great pleasure, for you all to meet together. That is all."

Only a few weeks after this meeting the group received their first important publicity: a photo of the six devotees and little Sarasvatī appeared with an article by the famous columnist Atticus in the Sunday Times. Guru dāsa was quoted as saying, "Hare Kṛṣṇa is a chant which sets God dancing on your tongue. Try chanting 'Queen Elizabeth' and see the difference." The article described the missionary group from America as "very gentle people, a bit unworldly, but not at all ingenuous." Citing their renunciation of illicit sex and intoxication, the article commented, "Tame you might think, but they look very well on it. And what's likely to earn them a public is their chanting." Within a few days the same article appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, but with a new headline: "Krishna Chants Startle London." Prabhupāda was pleased when he saw the headline. Indeed, his gṛhastha disciples had succeeded where his sannyāsī Godbrothers had failed. Although several of Prabhupāda's scholarly Godbrothers had lectured around England over the last thirty-five years, only one person, an elderly English lady named Elizabeth Bowtell, had shown interest.

Yamunā had written Prabhupāda to find out if they should visit Mrs. Bowtell (she had received the name Vinoda-vāṇī dāśī), and Prabhupāda had replied, "The history of this Vani dasi is that she is an old lady, and has a house and has hung a sign, Gaudiya Math, but that is all." If they liked, Prabhupāda had said, they could pay her a courtesy call and see if she would let them use her place for kīrtanas. One of the men had gone to see her at her home, several hours out of the city. But from behind her closed door she had refused to meet with him unless he brought an introductory letter from the Gaudiya Math in New Delhi. Vinoda-vāṇī dāśī was the fruit of thirty-five years of sannyāsīs' preaching in England, whereas in four months Prabhupāda's young American missionaries were "startling London."

After months of living scattered throughout the city, the devotees met a landlord who allowed them to stay together rent free in a vacant warehouse at Covent Garden. The devotees improvised a temporary temple and soon recruited their first three British devotees. The newcomers at once took to the full Kṛṣṇa conscious regimen, including the dhoti and shaved head—and loved it.

The devotees, thrilled to see their group expanding and Prabhupāda's potency working, decided to phone Prabhupāda from their landlord's office. The telephone was a conference phone, and Prabhupāda's voice came over the little loudspeaker on the desk. The devotees sat around the desk, listening tensely.

"Prabhupāda," Mukunda said, "we have some new brahmacārīs here." "Oh, are they cooking capātīs?" Prabhupāda asked from across the ocean. The devotees laughed uncontrollably, then hushed to hear more.

"No," said Mukunda. "But they will be now." The devotees each told Prabhupāda how they missed him, and he said he missed them too and would come as soon as they could get a place.

After allowing the devotees three months in the warehouse at Covent Garden, the landlord announced that he needed to use the space and the devotees would have to move. The couples moved to three separate locations, and again their strong group spirit dissipated.

Prabhupāda began sending two or three letters a week to the scattered couples, praising them for their sincere determination. The devotees would gather regularly, if only to show one another their latest letters. Prabhupāda wrote to Mukunda of his desire to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West, specifically London.

So far as I am concerned, I always wish only to expedite my mission of life to spread Krishna Consciousness in the Western part of the world. I am still firmly convinced that if I can establish this movement through the help of all the boys and girls who have now joined with me, then it will be a great achievement. I am old man, and there has already been warning, but before I leave this body, I wish to see some of you very strong in Krishna Consciousness understanding. I am very glad and proud also that you six boys and girls, although you have not been able to establish a nice center in London, still you have done your best. And the news has reached far away in India that my disciples are doing very nice work in Krishna Consciousness. So that is my pride. I have received a letter from my Godbrother informing me that it has been advertised in India that in Vietnam also somebody is spreading Hare Krishna Movement. So there is no need to be disappointed. You go on with your work as best as Krishna gives you the opportunity, and there is no cause of your anxiety. Everything is going smoothly. But since you are now separated, the strength of your activities appears to be a little disturbed. Now you try to assemble together in the same spirit as you were doing, and in that case, temple or no temple, your movement will go on progressively. We are not much concerned about the temple because temple worship is not primary factor in this age. Primary factor is Sankirtan. But sometimes we want a center where people may gather and see, so a temple is required secondarily. So try your best immediately to live together. I am very much eager to see that you are again living together.

For Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, his instruction that they preach in London was much more binding than any other obligation. He was in their hearts, and they thought of him constantly. In carrying out his orders and trying to please him, they were constrained not by force or law but by love. To please the spiritual master is to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead; and for Prabhupāda's sincere disciples, to please him seemed the end in itself.

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Los Angeles

June 23, 1969

After leaving New Vrindaban, Śrīla Prabhupāda visited his center in Los Angeles, where he installed Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Although, as he had told his disciples in London, the “primary factor” was saṅkīrtana, Deity worship was also necessary. In his writings Prabhupāda had discussed the need for Deity worship, and he had gradually introduced higher and higher standards of Deity worship in each of his ISKCON centers. Los Angeles, having become the model ISKCON center, was the natural place for him to introduce a more opulent and demanding standard for worshiping Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

While more than a hundred devotees and guests sat in the spacious hall, Prabhupāda bathed and dressed the little forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, then placed Them on the altar. He was inviting Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to descend, to give his disciples the opportunity to serve Them. He was offering his disciples Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, with faith that his disciples would not neglect Them. If the devotees somehow lost their enthusiasm, Prabhupāda explained in his lecture, then the worship would become like idol worship.

“If there is no life, then it is idol worship. Where there is life, feeling, then you think, ‘Where is Kṛṣṇa? Here is Kṛṣṇa. Oh, I have to serve Him. I have to dress Him. I have to serve Rādhārāṇī. She is here. Oh, I just have to do it very nicely and, as far as possible, decorate Her to the best capacity.’ If you think like this, then you are Kṛṣṇa conscious. But if you think that it is a brass-made doll or idol, then Kṛṣṇa will reciprocate with you accordingly. If you think that this is a brass-made idol, then it will remain brass-made idol to you forever. But if you elevate yourself to a higher platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then Kṛṣṇa—this very Kṛṣṇa—will talk with you. This Kṛṣṇa will talk with you.”

With each visit to each center, Prabhupāda gave the devotees more service, deepening their commitment to Kṛṣṇa. All the various services were actually the spiritual master's responsibility, he said, and when a disciple cleaned the temple or performed any service, he did so as the spiritual master's assistant. And any job done improperly was the spiritual master's anxiety. If the devotees whimsically changed the Deity worship or neglected the temple, then Prabhupāda, more than any disciple, would feel distress.

Whenever Prabhupāda saw a disciple eager to take on more of the anxiety of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he would assign that devotee greater responsibility. Anxiety for serving Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda said, was the greatest satisfaction. As Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had stated, “The trouble I encounter in Your devotional service I will consider the greatest happiness.”

Satisfaction for the devotee, Prabhupāda explained, lay in pleasing the previous spiritual masters, and that was best accomplished by preaching to the fallen souls. To the degree that the devotees carried out that order, they would satisfy their spiritual master and subsequently feel satisfaction themselves. Prabhupāda gave the example of Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs. When the gopīs pleased Kṛṣṇa in the rāsa dance, Kṛṣṇa smiled, and when the gopīs saw Kṛṣṇa's smile their happiness and beauty increased a million times. When Kṛṣṇa saw the newly increased beauty of the gopīs He became more pleased, and thus the happiness and beauty of the gopīs increased even more. This loving competition increased on and on unlimitedly.

Even in dealings between spiritual master and disciple a sense of loving competition prevailed, each wanting to serve the other, neither seeking service for himself. Prabhupāda was increasing the duties and responsibilities in each of his ISKCON centers, and sincere disciples were coming forward to accept those responsibilities; thus everyone was feeling satisfaction. This was pure devotional service—to be free from all material desires and to serve Kṛṣṇa as directed by the spiritual master and the scriptures.

When Prabhupāda said that his disciples would become happy by serving Kṛṣṇa, he spoke from his own deep realization of that ecstasy. Whenever he installed a Deity in one of the temples, his ecstasy was greater than that of any of his disciples. At the Ratha-yātrā festivals in Golden Gate Park or any public preaching function, he was the most enlivened. He, more than any of his disciples, wanted the public to come and chant and dance in the temple and see the Deity of Kṛṣṇa, and when they did, he was the most pleased. And if a disciple fell away, Prabhupāda was the most displeased.

Nor was Prabhupāda aloof from the details of temple management: the cost of things, how the devotees were being received in public, how each disciple was advancing. Although his disciples saw him as the most exalted Vaiṣṇava and intimate associate of Lord Kṛṣṇa, they knew he was always available to guide them in their services. He was their leader, but he was with them. He was far above them, but he remained close to them. Only rarely did he leave them behind—as at the Los Angeles Deity installation, when he began to cry, speaking directly to Kṛṣṇa: “Kṛṣṇa, I am most rotten and fallen, but I have brought this thing for You. Please take it.” Except for such rare moments, Prabhupāda's disciples saw him preaching and serving along with them.

* * *

San Francisco

July 25, 1969

The day before the Ratha-yātrā festival, Prabhupāda arrived at the San Francisco airport, where a crowd of fifty chanting devotees greeted him. Reporters stepped forward with what to them was an important, relevant question: “Swami, what is your opinion on the recent manned U.S. moon landing?”

“Shall I flatter you or tell the truth?” Prabhupāda asked.

The truth, they said.

“It is a waste of time because it does not benefit you if you cannot live there. The time could have been better spent in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We must go beyond this universe to the spiritual sky, which is eternal, beyond birth, death, old age, and disease.” The San Francisco Chronicle printed a picture and story: “Ecstasy in Concourse B.”

On the day of the Ratha-yātrā parade, a hundred devotees and a crowd of one thousand gathered on Haight Street before the tall cart. The deities of Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Balarāma, from their elevated platform within the cart, smiled down upon the crowd. A group of devotee-musicians

seated themselves within the cart, made last-minute checks of their loudspeaker system, and began kīrtana. In the center of the cart, just beneath the deity platform, a red upholstered vyāsāsana awaited Prabhupāda's arrival.

As Prabhupāda's car approached he could hear the cries of the devotees, and as he stepped from the car he saw them all bow down in obeisances. Folding his hands and smiling, he acknowledged his enthusiastic disciples, and he looked around with pleasure at the large crowd that had already gathered. Turning toward the cart, he beheld the deities on their throne, the same deities who had inaugurated Ratha-yātrā in America two years before. They were beautifully dressed and garlanded, and multicolored pennants and thick garlands of carnations decorated their cart. Ratha-yātrā was becoming more wonderful each year. Prabhupāda bowed down before Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Balarāma, and his disciples all bowed with him.

As Prabhupāda took his seat on the cart the kīrtana began again, and the cart, pulled with two long ropes by dozens of men and women, slowly began to move forward. Buckets of burning frankincense poured aromatic clouds from the deities' platform above Prabhupāda's head, as slowly the cart moved along the road to the park.

"How many people are behind us?" Prabhupāda asked, turning to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, who rode beside him on the cart and had been leading the kīrtana. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa climbed back and surveyed the crowd as far as he could see.

"Five thousand!"

"Sing 'Jaya Jagannātha,'" Prabhupāda said, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa then changed the chant from Hare Kṛṣṇa to "Jaya Jagannātha! Jaya Jagannātha!"

Throughout the parade Prabhupāda sat serenely watching, his right hand in his bead bag. The large crowd consisted mostly of young hippies but also included businessmen dressed in suits and ties, elderly persons with their grandchildren and families, and a few stray dogs. A mixed Sunday crowd.

Suddenly devotees in front began shouting, "Stop the cart! Stop the cart!" Ahead, the low arch of a park bridge spanned the roadway. The devotees managed to stop the 35-foot-high cart just before it reached the bridge. Although the parade appeared to have reached an unforeseen impasse, the chanting continued unabated. The previous year the procession had taken this same route—with a smaller cart—and even then Śyāmasundara had had to climb up and saw off the spire. This year, however, Nara-Nārāyaṇa had devised a collapsible dome with a crank to lower the canopy and superstructure. When Prabhupāda had heard of these plans, he had asked, "Are you sure you want to depend on mechanical means? It could be a disaster." Now the time to lower the canopy had come, and the crank wouldn't work.

With the cart stopped before the bridge, the chanters gathered in greater numbers, facing Prabhupāda and Lord Jagannātha. Under the bridge at least a thousand voices sang together,

creating an incredible echo. Then Prabhupāda stood, raised his arms to the crowd, and began dancing.

Bhavānanda: Everyone went wild. The sound was so uproarious you were deafened under that bridge. Prabhupāda was dancing, jumping on the cart.

Nara-Nārāyaṇa: He was dancing, and as he danced his feet crushed the flowers. His garland broke and flowers began cascading everywhere as he danced up and down. He was leaping very deliberately, almost like slow motion.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Prabhupāda was jumping up and down, and the people went crazy seeing him in complete ecstasy. He kept jumping and slowly turned around until he was face to face with Lord Jagannātha.

Prabhupāda sat down and still the car didn't go, and the people were roaring.

"What do they want?" Prabhupāda asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"I think they want to see you dance again, Śrīla Prabhupāda," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa replied.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes." He then got up and started dancing again. The white wool cap pushed to the back of his head, his arms extended, with the right hand still clutching the japa bead bag, his right forefinger extended, and long robes flowing.

The ecstatic chanting and dancing continued. After about fifteen minutes, Nara-Nārāyaṇa finally got the crank to work, and down came the canopy. Again the cart moved forward, under the bridge and on through the park. The crowd had grown now to ten thousand. This was much bigger than any Kṛṣṇa conscious festival ever held before.

Bhavānanda: Many of these people who attended Ratha-yātrā were intoxicated. We were not intoxicated, of course, but we were higher than they. That we could understand. Everyone was smiling, everyone was laughing, everyone was in ecstasy, everyone was dancing, everyone was chanting. And we were doing it more than anyone. We were doing more chanting, more laughing and smiling, and feeling more freedom. We were free to have a shaved head, free to wear a dhotī, free to blow a conchshell, free to spin around on the street and jump up. Even if you were a hippie you couldn't be more far out than the ratha cart and Jagannātha, because no one looks more far out than Him. The hippies had come dressed up in outfits with big feathers in their hair and everything, but they were dim compared to Jagannātha.

The parade route ended at an oceanside dance hall, The Family Dog Auditorium, where the devotees had prepared ten thousand feast plates of prasādam—fruit salad, apple chutney, halavā, and watermelon slices. Although the cart had stopped, the chanting continued, as Prabhupāda led the crowd inside the auditorium to a temporary stage and altar the devotees had erected among the bizarre trappings of the dance hall. A giant silk screen of Lord Caitanya covered the hall's Tibetan

maṇḍala, and pictures of Lord Viṣṇu and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī were on the stage. The Jagannātha deities now looked down from their high platform above Prabhupāda's seat, and a garlanded statue of Lord Kṛṣṇa stood on a marble pillar.

Prabhupāda began speaking, and the crowd quieted. He quoted a song by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura: "My dear Lord Caitanya, please be merciful upon me. I do not find anyone as merciful as You." Drawing the audience's attention to the large silkscreen of Lord Caitanya, Prabhupāda described the Lord's merciful distribution of the holy name of God. Lord Caitanya, he said, was teaching the same thing Lord Kṛṣṇa had taught in Bhagavad-gītā: "My dear sons, do not suffer in this abominable condition of material existence. Come back to Me. Come back to home. Enjoy eternal, blissful life, a life of knowledge."

Prabhupāda explained the simplicity of Kṛṣṇa consciousness:

"Lord Caitanya appeared five hundred years ago to establish the direct principles of Bhagavad-gītā. He showed that even if you do not understand the process of religion, then simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The results are practical. For example, when we were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa all the members who are assembled here were joining in, but now when I am talking about philosophy some are leaving. It is very practical. You can see. The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is so enchanting that anyone in any condition can take part. And if he continues to chant, gradually he will develop his dormant love of God. It is very simple.

"We are requesting everyone to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and take prasādam. When you are tired of chanting, the prasādam is ready; you can immediately take prasādam. And if you dance, then all bodily exercise is Kṛṣṇa-ized. And all of the attempts of the yoga processes are attained by this simple process.

"So chant, dance, take prasādam. Even if you do not at first hear this philosophy, it will act, and you will be elevated to the highest platform of perfection."

* * *

In the middle of a winter of struggle came a fortunate break for the London devotees: a meeting with George Harrison of the Beatles. For a long time the devotees had been thinking of ways to get the Beatles to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. To the Beatles' Apple Records Studio they had once sent an apple pie with Hare Krishna lettered on it. Another time they had sent a wind-up walking apple with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra printed on it. They had even sent a tape of one of their kīrtanas and had received a standard rejection letter from Apple Records. So it seemed to be Kṛṣṇa's special arrangement when Śyāmasundara suddenly met one of the most sought-after celebrities in the world, George Harrison.

In a crowded room at Apple Records, Śyāmasundara, shaven-headed and wearing robes, sat hoping for a chance to have a few words with someone connected with the Beatles. Then George came down the stairs from a conference. As he entered the room, he saw Śyāmasundara. Walking over and sitting down beside Śyāmasundara, he asked, "Where have you been? I've been trying to meet

the Hare Kṛṣṇa people for the last couple of years." Śyāmasundara and George talked together for an hour, while everyone else hovered around. "I've really been trying to meet you people," George said. "Why don't you come to my place tomorrow?"

The next day Śyāmasundara went to George's for lunch, where he met the other Beatles: Ringo Starr, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney. They all had questions, but George was especially interested.

George: I had a copy of the Hare Kṛṣṇa album with Śrīla Prabhupāda singing Hare Kṛṣṇa with the devotees. I'd had the record at least two years. But I got it the week it was pressed. I was open to it. You attract those things. So I used to play that a lot of the time. I was chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra long before I met Śyāmasundara, Guru dāsa, and Mukunda. I was just pleased to hear the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and have a copy of the record.

And I knew about Prabhupāda because I had read all the liner notes on that album. Having been to India I could tell where the devotees were all coming from, with the style of dress and shaved heads. I had seen them on the streets of Los Angeles and New York. Having read so many books and looking for yogīs, my concept of the devotees wasn't like the other people, who think the devotees have all escaped from a lunatic asylum in their pajamas. No, I was aware of the thing and that it was a pretty heavy one, much more austerities than other groups—like no coffee, chocolate, or tea.

Śyāmasundara continued to see George regularly, and they soon became friends. George, who had been practicing a mantra given him by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, began to hear for the first time about bhakti-yoga and the Vedic philosophy. He talked openly to Śyāmasundara, Guru dāsa, and Mukunda of his spiritual quest and his realizations of karma.

George: A yogī I met in India said, "You are really lucky. You have youth, fame, fortune, health, but at the same time that's not enough for you. You want to know about something else." Most people don't even get to the point where they realize there's something beyond that wall. They are just trying to get up on top of that wall, to be able to eat and have a nice house and be comfortable and all that. But I was fortunate enough to get all that in time to realize there's something else to life, whereas most people get worn out just trying to attain material things.

After a visit to Haight-Ashbury in 1967 George had begun to feel guilty for his role in promulgating the LSD culture. He had had the impression that the hippies of Haight-Ashbury were creative craftsmen, but when he saw them drugged, dirty, and hopeless—"a West Coast extension of the Bowery"—he felt partly responsible. He decided to use his influential position by writing and singing songs about something more than psychedelics and sex. He was also feeling an increasing interest in Indian spirituality, due, he felt, to karma from his previous lives.

George: I feel at home with Kṛṣṇa. I think that's something that has been there from a previous birth. So it was like the door was opening to me at that time, but it was also like a jigsaw puzzle and I needed all these little pieces to make a complete picture. And that is what has been happening by the devotees and Swami Bhaktivedanta coming along, or some devotee giving me a book or my hearing that album. It's all been slowly fitting together.

And these are some of the reasons why I responded to Śyāmasundara and Guru dāsa when they first came to London. Let's face it, if I'm going to have to stand up and be counted, then I'll be with these guys rather than with those over there. It's like that. I'll be with the devotees rather than with the straight people who are the so-called saints.

George offered to help the devotees get a building in London, and he and Śyāmasundara spoke of making a Hare Kṛṣṇa record. But Śyāmasundara never pressed him.

George was the glamorous superstar, the “quiet, serious Beatle,” the fabulous guitarist and singer who had access to all the greats, to presidents and queens, wherever he went. And Śyāmasundara had a glamor of his own. He was tall, six feet two, and although shaven-headed, strikingly handsome. And he was a Vaiṣṇava, fully dedicated to the Indian spirituality George was so fond of.

When Prabhupāda heard about George, he took seriously the possibility that George might fully take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Carrying this to its logical conclusion, Prabhupāda envisioned a world revolution in consciousness—spearheaded by the Kṛṣṇa conscious Beatles.

It is understood from your letter that Mr. George Harrison has a little sympathy for our movement, and if Krishna is actually satisfied on him surely he will be able to join with us in pushing on the Samkirtan movement throughout the world. Somehow or other the Beatles have become the cynosure of the neighboring European countries and America also. He is attracted by our Samkirtan Party and if Mr. George Harrison takes the leading part in organizing a huge Samkirtan Party consisting of the Beatles and our ISKCON boys, surely we shall change the face of the world so much politically harassed by the maneuvers of the politicians.

For the London devotees, George's friendship heightened the excitement of Prabhupāda's coming to London. Now that a world-famous personality was waiting to meet Prabhupāda, they felt perhaps they had another way to please him and to make preaching in London a success.

George, by his association with Kṛṣṇa consciousness and by dint of his own spiritual evolution, began to express his devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa in his songs. Reading Prabhupāda's Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, he could appreciate the superiority of the personal conception of God over the impersonal. Guru dāsa showed George the verse in the Gīta where Kṛṣṇa says that He is the basis of the impersonal Brahman. George liked the concepts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but he was wary of showing exclusive devotion to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. The devotees, therefore, dealt with him accordingly, so as not to disturb him.

On January 11 Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote another letter to the devotees in London, expressing more ideas of how George could best serve Kṛṣṇa.

I am so glad that Mr. Harrison is composing songs like “Lord whom we so long ignored.” He is very thoughtful. When we actually meet, I shall be able to give him thoughts about separation from Krishna, and they will be able to compose very attractive songs for public reception. The public is in need of such songs, and if they are administered through nice agents like the Beatles, it will surely be a great success.

Prabhupāda cautioned the devotees not to simply depend on George for help but to try to find a building themselves and rent it. George did want to help, however, and again he suggested the devotees make a record on the Apple label. An old favorite idea of the London devotees had been to get the Beatles to make a record chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa; if the Beatles did it, the mantra would certainly become world famous. George liked the idea, but he preferred that the devotees sing it and he produce it on the Apple label. "You guys make the money, rather than we get it," he said. "Let's make a record."

So the devotees went over to George's house for a chanting session. George dubbed in his guitar, and a few weeks later the devotees returned and heard their tape. George was ready to try a session at the studio, so the devotees agreed to meet him and his musician friend Billy Preston at Trident Studios on St. Anne's Alley. They recorded for a few hours; the tape sounded good. George and Śyāmasundara agreed on a date for the actual recording.

On the day of the recording about a dozen devotees, including some newly recruited Britishers, assembled at E.M.I. recording studios on Abbey Road. When the first group of devotees arrived in George's Mercedes, a crowd of teenagers began singing Hare Kṛṣṇa to the tune popularized by the rock musical Hair. While Yamunā applied Vaiṣṇava tilaka to the foreheads of the recording technicians, Mālātī began unpacking the picnic baskets of prasādam she had brought, and some of the other devotees put up pictures of Kṛṣṇa and lit incense. The studio was Kṛṣṇa-ized.

With Paul McCartney and his wife, Linda, operating the control console, the recording session began. Everyone worked quickly, making Side One of the 45 rpm record in about an hour. George played organ, and Mukunda played mṛdaṅga. Yamunā sang the lead with Śyāmasundara backing her, and the other voices blended in a chorus. And to make it come out exactly right, everyone concentrated on Prabhupāda and prayed for spiritual strength.

On the fourth take, everything went smoothly, with Mālātī spontaneously hitting a brass gong at the end. Then they recorded the flip side of the record: prayers to Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lord Caitanya and His associates, and the six Gosvāmīs. Afterward, George dubbed in the bass guitar and other voices. The devotees, engineers—everyone—felt good about it. "This is going to be big," George promised.

As the record went into production the devotees returned to their regular work, still living separately. Prabhupāda set the time of his arrival for early September. He would go to Hamburg and then come to London, he said—even if there was no temple. Miraculously, only two months before Prabhupāda's arrival, things began to come together.

Guru dāsa met a real estate agent with a building on Bury Place, near the British Museum; the devotees could move in immediately. An ideal location, forty-one pounds a week, and immediate occupancy—it was wonderful. Mukunda wrote Prabhupāda asking him for money for the down payment. Prabhupāda agreed. Śyāmasundara got a letter from George on Apple Corporation Ltd. stationery stating that Apple would guarantee payments if the devotees defaulted. Within a week, the devotees had a five-story building in central London.

But when the devotees went to live at their new center on Bury Place, city officials said they did not have the proper housing permits. The red tape could take weeks, even months. Again the devotees were without a place to live and worship together. Śyāmasundara, however, on faith that everything would work out, began constructing a temple room of California redwood in the building.

John Lennon then suggested to Śyāmasundara that the devotees come and live with him at Tittenhurst, a large estate he had recently purchased near Ascot. He needed some renovation done, and if the devotees would help he would give them a place to live. "Can our guru also stay there?" Śyāmasundara asked. John agreed, and the devotees moved into the former servants' quarters at John's estate.

Only a few weeks before Prabhupāda's arrival the record, "Hare Krishna Mantra," was released. Apple Records staged a promotion and brought press reporters and photographers in a multicolored bus to a blue and white pavilion where the devotees had gathered with George.

The first day the record sold seventy thousand copies. Within a few weeks the devotees appeared on the popular TV show *Top of the Pops*, singing "their song."

John Lennon's estate, formerly owned by the Cadbury family, consisted of seventy-six acres of lawn and forest, with a large manor and many smaller buildings. John and his wife, Yoko, lived in the manor. The servants' quarters, where Prabhupāda and the devotees were to live, were four separate apartments in a single narrow building near the manor. About fifteen devotees moved in, reserving one apartment for Prabhupāda and his servant.

John wanted the devotees to tear out the hardwood walls and floors in the main house and replace them with new walls and black and white marble tile floors. While this renovation was beginning, Īśāna, who had recently arrived from Canada, began with a few helpers to convert the old music recital hall into a temple, complete with vyāsāsana for Śrīla Prabhupāda. The devotees worked day and night on Prabhupāda's quarters, the temple room, and Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana. With such energy did they work that John and Yoko could see that the devotees were obviously in love with their spiritual master. When the devotees were making a tape to send to Prabhupāda in Germany, Īśāna asked John if he had anything he wanted to say to their guru. John smiled and said he would like to know Prabhupāda's secret that made his followers so devoted.

The stage was set. The time had come for the principal character to enter. Lord Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee was at last coming to England. For the six devotees who had pioneered Kṛṣṇa consciousness in London, it had been a long struggle. But now it seemed that all their once-impossible dreams were coming true. They had found a place for Prabhupāda to live in, and they had obtained a temple in the center of London. This was Kṛṣṇa's blessing.

SPL 30: London: A Dream Fulfilled

CHAPTER THIRTY

London: A Dream Fulfilled

= London

September 11, 1969

With the cooperation of Apple Records and Lufthansa German Airlines, the devotees arranged a reception for Prabhupāda at London's Heathrow Airport. As soon as Prabhupāda descended the stairs of the airplane, he was escorted to a car and driven to a V.I.P. lounge, bypassing the formalities of immigration and customs. As Prabhupāda stepped from the car, the devotees ran out of the terminal and offered obeisances on the wet pavement, while Śrīla Prabhupāda looked down on them, smiling. The devotees rose, brushing wet macadam from their dhotīs and sārīs, and joyfully surrounded Prabhupāda as he entered the lounge.

Inside the terminal Prabhupāda confronted a mass of reporters and cameramen and several dozen friends of the devotees. A clean cloth covered one of the lounge sofas, and vases with yellow gladioluses sat on either side. Prabhupāda walked over to the sofa and sat down, and Śyāmasundara garlanded him with red and white carnations. Prabhupāda began leading kīrtana.

The devotees were oblivious to all but Prabhupāda, and the reporters resigned themselves to simply standing and observing while the devotees sang and danced ecstatically. The eager devotees were unabashed during the kīrtana, and their shouts of "Haribol!" and "Jaya Prabhupāda!" as well as blasts from a conchshell, punctuated the regular chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

After the kīrtana the reporters remained at a distance as Prabhupāda spoke affectionately to almost each devotee seated before him. "Where is Jānakī?" he asked. "Oh, yes, how are you? Vibhāvati, how is your daughter? Actually you are all my fathers and mothers. You are taking such care..."

For the devotees, only they and Prabhupāda were present in the lounge, and they strained to catch everything he did or said. They couldn't have cared less about any outsider's reaction. Finally, Mukunda invited the reporters to come forward: "If any of you gentlemen have any questions, you can ask them of Prabhupāda."

The reporters, moving in: "What do you think of this reception?"

Prabhupāda: "I am not very much fond of reception. I want to know how people give reception to this movement. That is my concern."

Devotees in unison: "Haribol!"

Reporter: "Is this a very special welcome for you, or is this a performance you go through each day?"

Prabhupāda: "No, wherever I go, I have got my disciples. In Western countries I have got now about twenty centers, especially in America. So the American boys are very enthusiastic. I think in Los Angeles and San Francisco I got a very great reception. In the Ratha-yātrā festival about ten thousand boys and girls followed me for seven miles."

Devotees: "Haribol!"

Sun reporter: "What do you try to teach, sir?"

Prabhupāda: "I am trying to teach what you have forgotten."

Devotees (laughing): "Haribol! Hare Kṛṣṇa!"

Sun reporter: "Which is what?"

Prabhupāda: "That is God. Some of you are saying there is no God. Some of you are saying God is dead. And some of you are saying God is impersonal or void. These are all nonsense. I want to teach all the nonsense people that there is God. That is my mission. Any nonsense can come to me—I shall prove that there is God. That is my Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. It is a challenge to the atheistic people: This is God. As we are sitting here face to face, you can see God face to face, if you are sincere and if you are serious. That is possible. Unfortunately, you are trying to forget God. Therefore you are embracing so many miseries of life. So I am simply preaching that you become Kṛṣṇa conscious and be happy. Don't be swayed by these nonsense waves of *māyā*, or illusion."

When a reporter asked if the singing was "essential to the sustenance of your faith," Prabhupāda answered at length, describing the cleansing effect of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He quoted Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's declaration that anyone without God consciousness has no good qualities. "Test any of our students," Prabhupāda said, "—how they are good, how they are advanced. Test it. Bring anyone in the world and compare with any one of our boys. You will find how much difference there is in their character and their feeling and their consciousness. If you want a peaceful society, then you must make people God conscious, Kṛṣṇa conscious. Everything will be automatically resolved. Otherwise your so-called United Nations will not help."

The reporters asked about Billy Graham, the moon landing, the war in Ireland, and the whereabouts of Prabhupāda's wife and children. They asked him to turn his head toward them, and they clicked away with their cameras. They thanked him, and the reception dispersed.

Prabhupāda went from the building to the gleaming white Rolls Royce awaiting him outside, courtesy of John Lennon. Prabhupāda entered the back seat and sat crosslegged. The limousine was equipped with darkened windows and a lavish interior, including a television. The devotees had become so confused in their excitement that none of them had thought to join Prabhupāda, and the chauffeur whisked him away to Tittenhurst. Prabhupāda sat silently, except for his occasionally audible chanting, as the chauffeur headed through the winding roads leading away from the airport.

He was in England. His father, Gour Mohan, had never wanted him to come to England. Once an uncle had told Gour Mohan that his son should go to England to become a barrister. But Gour Mohan had said no; if his son went there the meat-eaters, drinkers, and sex-mongers might influence him. But now, seventy years later, Prabhupāda had indeed come to London—not to be influenced by the Englishmen but to influence them. He had come to teach them what they had forgotten.

And he was off to a good start, under Kṛṣṇa's special care. When he had had to live alone in New York City without any money, that had been Kṛṣṇa's mercy. And now he was entering England in a chauffeured limousine, also Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Accepting the ride as part of Kṛṣṇa's plan, Prabhupāda remained deeply fixed in his purpose of carrying out the order of his spiritual master, whatever circumstances awaited.

As they turned onto Route 4, proceeding toward Slough, Prabhupāda saw factories and warehouses and then the flat countryside, with orchards, fields, and grazing horses. The grey, chilly weather hinted of winter ahead. After about twenty minutes Prabhupāda reached the wealthy neighborhood of Ascot and soon, appearing on the left, the high redwood fence surrounding the Lennon estate.

Prabhupāda had arrived before his disciples. But those who had remained at the manor excitedly received him and showed him to his room on the second floor of the servants' quarters. The small room was chilly and damp, with a low table for a desk and wall-to-wall carpeting made from pieces of rug taken from the other rooms. The adjoining room was bare and even smaller. Prabhupāda sat down at his low desk. "Where is everyone?" he asked. As he leaned back and gazed out the window he saw rain just beginning to fall.

When George, John, and Yoko dropped by after Prabhupāda's lunch, Śyāmasundara invited them to come up and meet Prabhupāda. George turned to John and asked, "Do you want to go up?" The bearded, bespectacled master of Tittenhurst, hair down to his shoulders, assented. Yoko also was curious. So up they all went to Prabhupāda's little room.

Smiling graciously from behind his desk, Prabhupāda asked his guests to enter and be seated. Here were two of the most famous people in England, and Kṛṣṇa wanted him to speak to them. Prabhupāda removed his garland and handed it to Śyāmasundara, indicating that he should put it around George's neck.

"Thank you," said George. "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda smiled. "This is Kṛṣṇa's blessing."

"Hare Kṛṣṇa," George replied again.

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "there is a verse in Bhagavad-gītā: yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ/ sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokas tad anuvartate. The idea is that anything which is accepted by the leading persons, ordinary persons follow them. Yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhaḥ. Śreṣṭhaḥ means 'leading persons.' Ācarati means 'act.' Whatever leading persons act, people in general follow them. If the leading person says it is nice, then it is all right—the others also accept it. So by the grace of God, Kṛṣṇa, you are leaders. Thousands of young men follow you. They like you. So if you give them something actually nice, the face of the world will change."

Although George and John were about the same age as most of Prabhupāda's disciples, Prabhupāda considered them śreṣṭhas, respected leaders. "You are also anxious to bring some peace in the world," Prabhupāda continued. "I have read sometimes your statement. You are anxious also."

Everyone is. Every saintly person should be anxious to bring in peace in the world. But we must know the process." He explained the "peace formula" according to Bhagavad-gītā: only those who recognize the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the proprietor of everything, the object of all sacrifices, and the friend of everyone can find peace.

Prabhupāda then told the two Beatles even more directly what he had already hinted at: they should learn Kṛṣṇa consciousness and help teach it to the world. "I request you to at least understand this philosophy to your best knowledge," he said. "If you think it is nice, pick it up. You are also willing to give something to the world. So try this. You have read our books, this Bhagavad-gītā As It Is?"

John: "I've read bits of the Bhagavad-gītā. I don't know which version it was. There's so many different translations."

Prabhupāda: "There are different translations. Therefore I have given this edition, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is."

Prabhupāda explained that the material world is a place of misery. Nature is cruel. In America President Kennedy was thought to be the most fortunate, happy man, honored throughout the world. "But within a second"—Prabhupāda loudly snapped his fingers—"he was finished. Temporary. Now what is his position? Where is he? If life is eternal, if the living entity is eternal, where he has gone? What he is doing? Is he happy, or is he distressed? He is born in America, or China? Nobody can say. But it is a fact that, as living entity, he is eternal. He is existing."

Prabhupāda explained the transmigration of the soul. Then again he requested, "Try to understand it, and if it is nice you take it up. You are after something very nice. Is my proposal unreasonable?" The two Beatles glanced at one another but didn't answer. Prabhupāda gave a soft, amused laugh. "You are all intelligent boys. Try to understand it."

Prabhupāda spoke of the importance of music in the Vedas. "The Sāma Veda," he said, "is full of music. Followers of the Sāma Veda are always in music. Through musical vibration they are approaching the Supreme." He then sang slowly three verses from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

matir na kṛṣṇe parataḥ svato vā

mitho 'bhipadyeta grha-vratānām

adānta-gobhir viśatām tamisram

punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām

na te viduḥ svārtha-gatiṁ hi viṣṇum

durāśayā ye bahir-artha-māninaḥ

andhā yathāndhair upanīyamānās

te 'pīśa-tantryām uru-dāmnī baddhāḥ
 naiṣāṁ matis tāvad urukramāṅghrīm
 sprśaty anarthāpagamo yad-arthaḥ
 mahīyasāṁ pāda-rajo-'bhiṣekaṁ
 niṣkiñcanānāṁ na vṛñīta yāvat*

Then Prabhupāda asked his guests what philosophy they were following. "Following?" John asked.

"We don't follow anything," Yoko said. "We are just living."

"We've done meditation," said George. "Or I do my meditation, mantra meditation."

They began to ask questions—the same questions Prabhupāda had heard so many times before. After hearing Prabhupāda's explanation of Brahman, the all-pervading spiritual energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Yoko doubted whether Brahman could remain pure and not deteriorate in time. Prabhupāda advised that she would have to become a serious student before she could actually understand spiritual philosophy.

John and Yoko, being devoted eclectics, had difficulty accepting Prabhupāda's concept of Vedic authority.

John: "We still have to keep sifting through, like through sand, to see who's got the best."

Prabhupāda: "No. One thing you try to understand. Why these people—if Kṛṣṇa is not the supreme authority—why they are taking Kṛṣṇa's book and translating? Why don't you try to understand?"

George: "I'm not saying Kṛṣṇa isn't the Supreme. I believe that. There is a misunderstanding about the translation of the Sanskrit Gītā into English. And I was saying that there are many versions, and I think we thought you were trying to say your version, your translation, was the authority and that the other translations were not. But we didn't really have misunderstanding as to the identity of Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda: "That's all right. If you believe Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord, if that is your version, then you have to see who is most addicted to Kṛṣṇa. These people are twenty-four hours chanting Kṛṣṇa. And an other person, who has not a single word Kṛṣṇa—how can he become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa? How can he, who does not utter even the name of Kṛṣṇa, become a representative of Kṛṣṇa? If Kṛṣṇa is authority—and that is accepted—therefore those who are directly addicted to Kṛṣṇa, they are authorities."

After more than an hour of conversation, Prabhupāda distributed some prasādam to John, George, Yoko, and the few disciples in his room. If these śreṣṭhas were to take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that

would be good for them and many others also. He had done his duty and provided them the opportunity. It was Kṛṣṇa's message, and to accept it or not was now up to them.

John said he had something to do, and he excused himself. As everyone was leaving, Yoko, walking down the stairs, turned to John and said, "Look at how simply he's living. Could you live like that?"

In the evening Prabhupāda sat with the three couples—Śyāmasundara and Mālatī, Guru dāsa and Yamunā, and Mukunda and Jānakī. After a year's separation they were happily with Prabhupāda, and he was happy to be with them. The love they shared and their mutual satisfaction at being together was based on a unifying desire to establish Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana movement in this important city. Now that Prabhupāda had come to London, work would not slacken; it would increase under his expert guidance. Prabhupāda could daily instruct the men on organizing more London preaching, and they could report to him as necessary.

The women could also directly serve him, cleaning his quarters, washing and ironing his laundry, and cooking his meals.

"No one can afford a house like this in England anymore," Prabhupāda said. "England has gone down. Now these young boys own a place like this. And we are here,"

"Prabhupāda," Śyāmasundara spoke up, "our record sold fifty thousand copies yesterday."

"Oh!" Prabhupāda's eyes widened. "Very big business!"

Prabhupāda said that their money and energy should go toward opening the temple in the city. Now they were living comfortably on this aristocratic estate in the suburbs, and certainly they should try to involve these important celebrities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness as far as possible. But the main business should be to open a temple in the city. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had preferred to establish temples in the cities, where the people were. Of course, if John could give this place to Kṛṣṇa and if the devotees could maintain cows and cultivate the land, as in New Vrindaban, then that would be a different matter. They would have to see what Kṛṣṇa desired.

Prabhupāda was sorry that some of his disciples were obliged to work full time renovating the estate in exchange for their stay. Brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas, he said, had the serious work of cultivating spiritual knowledge and teaching it to others, and they deserved the respect and support of the rest of society. The arrangement at Tittenhurst seemed more business than charity. But they should tolerate it as a temporary situation.

Prabhupāda talked with Śyāmasundara, Mukunda, and Guru dāsa about their struggle to get housing permits and renovate the temple downtown. Śyāmasundara had been right, Prabhupāda said, to begin renovating the temple; Kṛṣṇa would protect their investment. When Prabhupāda learned they had secured a series of public lectures that would commit him to three months in London, he smiled. He would be glad to stay and preach in England, he said, for as long as it took to open the London center.

Prabhupāda commended his six London pioneers on succeeding where his sannyāsī Godbrothers had failed. He told them that because they had chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa with faith, they had succeeded. They were not great scholars or renunciants, yet they had faith in the holy name and the order of their spiritual master. Prabhupāda said that he also was not a great scholar, but that he had staunch faith, the real requirement for spiritual success.

A devotee could go many places and accomplish many things, Prabhupāda said, but unless he was free of material motives he would not be able to implant the seed of bhakti into the hearts of others. Prabhupāda cited Śivānanda, who had gone alone to Hamburg and tried his best, with faith in his spiritual master. Now Kṛṣṇa was blessing Śivānanda with a little success: a storefront temple, newly recruited devotees, an interested professor, and other guests coming and chanting. Even one lone preacher could accomplish many things for Kṛṣṇa, provided the preacher was free from sense gratification and the desire for profit, adoration, and distinction.

Śrīla Prabhupāda rose early, about one A.M., and began dictating his latest book, Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa, begun in Los Angeles eight months before, was a summary of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's Tenth Canto. Starting in 1959 with the First Canto, Prabhupāda had been translating each successive verse, giving a roman transliteration, Sanskrit-English synonyms, the English translation, and then his commentary. Kṛṣṇa, however, was all in English, with translation and commentary blended together as transcendental stories.

In his verse-by-verse translation of the Bhāgavatam, Prabhupāda was still working on the Third Canto, so to reach the Tenth Canto could take many years. But he was uncertain how many years longer he would live, and the thought of passing away without giving the world an authorized, readable account of the Tenth Canto had been unbearable. Being the account of Lord Kṛṣṇa's earthly pastimes, the Tenth Canto was the climax of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the richest nectar of transcendental literature. Now Prabhupāda had enough manuscript pages to print a first volume, complete with the many color illustrations he had commissioned his artists to paint. To print such a book would be expensive, and Prabhupāda had no money. But he depended fully on Kṛṣṇa and translated quickly in the quiet of early morning.

At 4:30 Prabhupāda's secretary, Puruṣottama, entered, followed by Yamunā dāsī. Puruṣottama offered āratī to Prabhupāda's small Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities while Yamunā watched, eager to learn. Prabhupāda sang prayers, accompanying himself on the harmonium.

During Prabhupāda's maṅgala-āratī ceremony, the other dozen or so disciples assembled for their own maṅgala-āratī at the temple. As they walked the damp pathway to the temple they felt the cold air and heard the bell and Prabhupāda's singing. They could see through the predawn mist the light coming from Prabhupāda's window on the second floor, and the building looked like a lantern in the dark. The sound of the harmonium drifted mystically through the trees.

Later that morning some of the devotees brought Prabhupāda several news articles about his London arrival. The Daily Sketch, with its headline "Enter His Divine Grace Abhaya Charan Bhaktivedanta Swami," carried a foot-high photo of Prabhupāda playing karatālas. The Sun's story, "Happiness is Hare Krishna," appeared with a photo of Prabhupāda and the devotees. And the Daily Mirror showed Sarasvatī and one of the adult devotees.

The Daily Telegraph, however, carried a different kind of article: "Hindu Temple Protests." "Conversion of office premises in Bloomsbury into a Hindu temple is being investigated by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works," the article began. The devotees' neighbors at Bury Place had apparently complained about the renovation that had been going on for the past two weeks. The article quoted a Camden council member: "If their planning application is not granted, it will cost them a lot of money."

Prabhupāda said the devotees should do everything they could to prevent delays or obstacles to their establishing the temple and installing Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. He suggested they go daily into the city, work carefully and persistently with the officials, and secure the authorization. Meanwhile, Śyāmasundara should continue his remodeling work at Bury Place.

For Prabhupāda, such diplomatic and legal strategy was as spiritual as translating Kṛṣṇa or singing before his Deities. He was serious, heavy; and his disciples sensed this as he looked at them with full concentration, his intelligent gaze penetrating to see if they understood his directions. This heaviness of the guru was an essential part of their relationship with him. They were young men, inexperienced, and he was sending them on a mature assignment that required both transcendental and worldly expertise.

Serving as Prabhupāda's menial messengers and workers, his disciples imbibed his gravity. And they too became heavy. They too became dedicated servants of their guru. To bungle an important order because of naivete or carelessness would be a spiritual disqualification. Prabhupāda had often told them a Vaiṣṇava is not a retired person who only sleeps and eats and chants Hare Kṛṣṇa. Rather, a Vaiṣṇava fights for Kṛṣṇa, as did Arjuna and Hanumān. And as the devotee tries his best, working in full surrender, Kṛṣṇa supports and protects him.

Dawn arrived, and time for Prabhupāda's morning walk. The cold September night shrouded the morning in heavy fog. Some of the low-lying grounds were waterlogged this time of year, and even in the higher plots the long grass would remain wet until mid-morning. "This climate," Prabhupāda admitted, "is not at all suitable for me." But having heard of the beauty of the grounds, he insisted on taking his usual morning walk.

Tittenhurst dated back to the 1770s, when the estate had been renowned for its many varieties of trees and shrubs—one of the most unusual collections in England. Even now, cypresses, weeping beech, austin poplars, royal palms, redwoods, varieties of pines, monkey puzzle trees, and orchards of cherry and apple graced the stately grounds. One cypress stood more than 125 feet tall, and the redwoods grew even taller. Bushes and vines grew in dense thickets. Close by the main house were hundreds of rhododendrons, a formal rose garden, and several fountains. The estate had its own lake, stocked with goldfish and perch, and at a far end of the property stood a row of greenhouses for grapes and peaches. Designed so as to be abloom in every season, the grounds had been carefully kept for generations, a recent owner having employed more than twenty gardeners. John, however, was deliberately allowing the grass to go uncut.

Prabhupāda walked out into the morning mist, onto the long, wet grass. Dressed almost entirely in black, he wore a Russian hat with earmuffs and black rubber Wellington boots. A black, full-length

overcoat, given him by the devotees in Germany, covered his robes and sweater, leaving only glimpses of saffron cloth.

As Prabhupāda walked, accompanied by several of his disciples, he passed a fountain near the main house and entered a grove. The path narrowed, with vines and bushes close in, and led them into an open meadow, once a well-tended lawn but now a field of high grass. Bulldozers had excavated an area which according to rumor would soon be a helicopter landing field.

At the bottom of the sloping meadow, Prabhupāda entered an orchard. Many leaves had fallen from the trees, and the sun's first rays now revealed shavings of autumn gold at Prabhupāda's feet. He stood under one of the trees, and the diffused sunlight made the sky beyond the branches glow golden. "In my childhood," he said, "there were so many names given to me. My maternal uncle called me Nandu, because I appeared the day after Kṛṣṇa appeared and there was a great celebration on that day. I was called Nandu because I was born the day after Kṛṣṇa. And I was also called Govardhana. One of my sisters used to call me Kacha. I've been called so many names. As children we were all very beautiful. There are always so many names given to them. But all these names—they are all dead and gone." He turned and began to walk again, saying nothing more on the subject.

Prabhupāda mentioned the British economy, which he said was sinking into the sea because of the pound's devaluation. So many British lords had gained their wealth by exploiting other nations; now, having exhausted their good karma, they were suffering the results of their sins. They were too poor to maintain their great estates. "They used to have seventeen men working full time just on the garden," Prabhupāda exclaimed, "and now they cannot even pay the taxes. So they have to give the whole thing up. And it is falling into the hands of the śūdras."

Īśāna asked Prabhupāda, "How is it that a person like me, from such a degraded background, can come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

"Because you are intelligent," Prabhupāda replied.

"I don't understand."

"Because you are intelligent," Prabhupāda repeated.

Īśāna's wife, Vibhāvātī, asked, "What is the meaning of spiritual master?"

"Actually I am not your spiritual master," Prabhupāda replied. "That title is simply a formality. You should think of me as your spiritual father, your eternal father."

As they walked past a tractor, Kulaśekhara remarked, "The tractor is a very wonderful invention, isn't it?"

Prabhupāda turned to Kulaśekhara. "This tractor is the downfall of the Indian village system."

"Why is that? It does the work of ten men."

"Yes," Prabhupāda said. "Previously, the young men of the village would be engaged in plowing the field. Then this tractor came along and did the work of all those young men, and they had nothing to do. So they went to the cities to try to find work, and they fell into illusion."

Stopping beside a clump of yellowed grass, Prabhupāda asked, "Why is this yellow grass different?" No one answered. "The other grass is green," he said, "but this is yellow. What is the reason?" Still no one answered. "This yellow grass is drying up," Prabhupāda explained, "because the roots are not attached. Therefore it is yellow. Similarly, when we detach ourselves from Kṛṣṇa, then we will dry up."

They walked to a spot where the grass grew almost six feet high. Stopping at a path the tractor had cut, Prabhupāda smiled. "Oh, we can go through there?" And he strode ahead with his cane into the head-high jungle of grass and weeds. He walked until he came to a low hill that had been cleared, and he stopped. As he stood there, surrounded by the sea of grass and a few disciples, Kulaśekhara asked about the song Prabhupāda had been singing earlier that morning.

"The song," Prabhupāda said, "is about Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He would rise, and He would go out at this time of morning, when the sun has risen but is not yet in the sky." As Prabhupāda spoke, the mist was already dissipating, and the golden glow in the sky had moved higher above the horizon. Prabhupāda raised his hands and swayed from side to side. "In this way," he said, "Caitanya Mahāprabhu would dance in the morning."

As they returned by the main house John Lennon stood gazing out through the glass doors, watching. Prabhupāda, walking with a cane, dressed in his black coat and his Wellingtons, looked like the gentleman of the estate out for his morning walk. Stopping now and then, he would look at certain trees, touching their bark, rubbing their leaves, inspecting them closely. At the beginning of the walk, a devotee had picked a rose and handed it to him, and he still held it in his hand with care. He had walked for an hour. Everywhere the scenery had been beautiful, and everywhere he had instructed his followers in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

As Prabhupāda approached the building where he lived, he met little Sarasvatī. Taking her hand, he walked along with her to the foot of the stairs, where they stopped. Prabhupāda was halfway up the stairs when he turned and saw Sarasvatī standing in the doorway, watching. He beckoned and called to her, "Come on," and she crawled up the stairs after him.

When Sarasvatī came into Prabhupāda's room, he asked her, "So, are you old enough to go to gurukula?"

"No," she said, shaking her head.

"Come here, I am going to put a stamp on your forehead, and then we are going to put you in a red mailbox and send you to gurukula."

Sarasvatī began to cry, "Mālatī! Mālatī! I don't want to go!" and ran and hid behind her mother.

"Come on, Sarasvatī," Prabhupāda coaxed. "Come sit on my lap, and I will give you some prasādam." She came and sat on Prabhupāda's knee. "Now get me the stamps, Puruṣottama," he teased. "We are going to send her to gurukula." Sarasvatī shrieked and ran to Mālātī.

To Śrīla Prabhupāda, Sarasvatī was a pure spirit soul, but because she was in a small child's body he didn't teach her philosophy; he teased her, gave her prasādam, and treated her with the affection of a grandfather. But through her attachment to him, she would become attached to Kṛṣṇa.

After breakfast, when the sun had warmed the air, Prabhupāda opened his windows, sat down at his harmonium, and sang bhajanas. As he sang with closed eyes, his head shaking, he played the harmonium, and Yamunā sat at the bottom of the stairs, crying tears of appreciation. Prabhupāda had been singing for a while when he stopped and called for Yamunā. "Do you enjoy my kīrtana?" he asked.

"Yes," she nodded, "very much."

"The prayers of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura," he said. "This sound is above the material platform. It is directly from the spiritual platform. And there is no need of understanding the language. It is just like a thunderburst. Everyone can hear the sound of thunder—there is no misunderstanding. Similarly, these songs are above the material platform, and they crack like thunder within your heart. Why don't you come here every day during my chanting?"

"That would be wonderful!"

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "from now on we will record." And every morning after that, Prabhupāda sang, and Puruṣottama and Yamunā would come to his room and record.

"What is your favorite bhajana?" Yamunā asked.

"What's yours?" Prabhupāda returned.

"Lord Caitanya's Śikṣāṣṭakam prayers."

"My favorite," said Prabhupāda, "is Hari hari viphale." He recited the gist of the prayer in English: "“O Lord Hari, I have spent my life uselessly. Although I have taken this rare human birth, I have not worshiped Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and so I have knowingly drunk poison.’ There is so much depth of meaning in Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's prayers."

Puruṣottama: Once Prabhupāda was sitting alone in his room. I walked by, and I heard him singing a prayer I'd never heard before. And I went in. Of course everyone knows he sings—he can sing very beautifully, very greatly inspired—but I'd never heard him sing as beautifully as he did that one time. I'd heard him sing many, many times in many temples, but I'd never heard him sing as beautifully as this. I felt very honored to hear it, very privileged. It was beautiful. When he was done, he just got up and said, "Let's go now."

Prabhupāda also chanted one chapter of Bhagavad-gītā daily for eighteen days. "Anywhere Bhagavad-gītā is chanted," he said, "that place becomes a tīrtha [a holy place]."

Puruṣottama reported to the devotees in the United States these activities of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

He is singing prayers a lot, and much of it is being recorded. I must admit that the tapes of songs and prayers he is making now are the best ones I have ever heard. Wait until you hear them when we get back. As the Bhāgavatam says, "Drink deep this nectar, O man of piety, and you shall be taken from this mortal frame!"

The women cooking for Prabhupāda were serving him American desserts: apple pie, doughnuts, glazed cookies. Prabhupāda would smile, but he would only nibble at his dessert. One afternoon he said, "These sweets are very nice, but no one has made me sandeśa." None of the devotees knew how to make Bengali sweets, so Prabhupāda took them into the kitchen and taught them to make sandeśa. Although they had watched carefully, their first attempts produced sandeśa that was dry and grainy. But Prabhupāda accepted it, preferring the sandeśa—which Kṛṣṇa Himself used to eat—to the Western confections.

For the devotees at Tittenhurst, to have Prabhupāda living among them was again to witness Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee as he engaged constantly in ecstatic devotional service with his body, mind, and words. They could see how Prabhupāda was speaking and acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness at every moment, and his presence confirmed that the most exalted platform of pure devotional service was a reality. His disciples felt bliss and renewed determination just being with him.

Prabhupāda's hosts, John and Yoko, also had the valuable opportunity to be near Prabhupāda, although they chose to keep apart. Remaining together in their own world, they mingled but rarely with the devotees. Prabhupāda's men continued to work under John's managers, and John was content to let the Swami and his entourage stay. When the head gardener asked John how to treat the devotees, he said, "Let them please themselves." On hearing of certain activities in the main house, Prabhupāda commented about the bad influence women sometimes have on men, but he kept out of John and Yoko's affairs. He had his own affairs in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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Having been whisked from the airport to Tittenhurst, Prabhupāda had seen little of London, and one day he asked Śyāmasundara to take him on a tour of the city. Prabhupāda had grown up in British Calcutta hearing London praised as the seat of Britain's world empire, so when he saw how small many of London's historic landmarks were he was particularly surprised. At Buckingham Palace he remarked, "We have many houses in Calcutta bigger than this." The Thames, celebrated in the writings of British authors he had studied in college, was a disappointment also. "It's a canal" he said. "It's only a canal. In my mind I thought it was bigger than the Ganges."

But the most interesting sight was the building at 7 Bury Place. City officials had recently granted the devotees permission to occupy the temple. That part of the battle was won. Now Śyāmasundara and his few helpers had to finish the remodeling. On seeing the temple's location near the British

Museum and Madame Tussauds Wax Museum, Śrīla Prabhupāda became even more anxious that Śyāmasundara fix an opening date as soon as possible.

* * *

In September Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Satsvarūpa about his stay at Tittenhurst Park.

Here there is a nice big hall, exactly suitable for a temple. I have begun to give lectures here on specific days, but there are no outsiders coming.

Prabhupāda wanted to preach to the “outsiders,” and if they wouldn't come to him, he would go to them. His first outside meeting, arranged by the devotees, was at Camden Town Hall, in the heart of London, and was well attended both by Britishers and by Indians. After Prabhupāda's brief lecture—only about fifteen minutes—a lively question-and-answer session began.

Woman: “Would you say Kṛṣṇa is God or Kṛṣṇa is love?”

Prabhupāda: “Without love, how can Kṛṣṇa be God?”

Woman: “No, I asked you.”

Prabhupāda: “Yes. That is the real position. Kṛṣṇa means “all- attractive.’ Anything which is all-attractive you generally love.”

Man: “Then the particle of the Supreme Being, man, is also all-love?”

Prabhupāda: “Yes, you are part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. You want to love somebody, and Kṛṣṇa wants to love you. This is loving exchange. But instead of loving Kṛṣṇa, you are trying to love something else. That is your trouble. The love is there in you and Kṛṣṇa, and when the love will be exchanged between you and Kṛṣṇa, that will be your perfection of life.”

Man: “Thank you.”

Indian woman: “Would it matter if I worshiped any other? Would it matter whether I worshiped Kṛṣṇa or Śiva or Christ or Buddha? Would it matter?”

Prabhupāda: “If you worship Śiva, you'll get Śiva. If you worship Kṛṣṇa, you'll get Kṛṣṇa. Why do you expect Kṛṣṇa by worshiping Śiva? What is your idea?”

Indian woman: “My idea is, would it matter?”

Prabhupāda: “Don't you suppose if you purchase a ticket for India you'll go to India? How can you go to America?”

Indian woman: “This is not the point.”

Prabhupāda: "This is the point. That is explained in Bhagavad-gītā: yānti deva-vratā devān pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ."

Indian woman: "But my point is..."

Prabhupāda: "Your point, you understand. Why don't you understand the description of Bhagavad-gītā? If you worship demigods like Śiva and others, you will go there. If you worship Kṛṣṇa, you'll go to Kṛṣṇa. What is the difficulty to understand?"

Indian woman: "Do you think that Śiva is a demigod?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, why not?"

Indian woman: "But Kṛṣṇa says that it doesn't matter the way you worship. All means have the same goal, and you will reach the same goal. 'You can take the different paths, but you will come to Me eventually.'"

Prabhupāda: "Try to understand. Suppose you have to go to the forty-second floor of a building. And you are going up one after another. So the goal is the forty-second story, but you cannot claim that after going a few steps, 'I have come to the goal, the forty-second story.' The path is one—that's all right—but you have to reach the ultimate goal. You do not know what is the ultimate goal. You simply say all paths reach to this goal. But you do not know what is the ultimate goal."

A young hippie stood up and shouted, "Hey, Swamiji!" People in the audience turned around and looked. "You said if we're not careful, in the next life we'll become a dog. But I want to tell you that I don't mind if I become a dog in my next life."

"You have my blessings," said Prabhupāda, and the young man sat down.

One-night lectures in scattered places around the city proved further the need of a temple. Prabhupāda had experienced a similar situation in New York City in 1965. At that time also he had had no temple. His audiences would listen respectfully and then disperse, and he would never see them again. To become Kṛṣṇa conscious, however, a person needed to hear about Kṛṣṇa repeatedly, and for that a temple was required. Once Prabhupāda had his temple established in London, thousands would be able to come and hear about Kṛṣṇa, take prasādam, and appreciate the lovely Deity form of the Lord. A temple would provide guests with regular, intimate contact with the devotees of the Lord, and this was essential. In the absence of a temple, however, Prabhupāda was prepared to go on lecturing all over London. Kṛṣṇa's teachings, Kṛṣṇa's kīrtana, and Kṛṣṇa's prasādam were absolute good; they would act regardless of the external situation.

Conway Hall was a five-hundred-seat auditorium in Red Lion Square in central London. By arranging a series of twelve lectures over the next three months, the devotees hoped to oblige Prabhupāda to stay in England at least that long. Guru dāsa had drawn up a list of lecture titles and printed fifty thousand handbills. Admission would be two shillings and sixpence.

The first night at Conway Hall about a hundred people attended. Prabhupāda sat on a cushion atop a table, leading kīrtana, while his disciples sat on the floor. Yamunā played harmonium, and Mukunda and Kulaśekhara played mṛdaṅgas. Prabhupāda's Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities stood on Their altar on a separate table beside Prabhupāda. A Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra banner hung against the back wall.

Guru dāsa had billed tonight's lecture "Teachings of the Vedas," and Prabhupāda explained that Vedic teachings can be understood only by hearing them from self-realized saints. After Prabhupāda's lecture the audience gave a sustained round of applause. Prabhupāda answered questions and had Yamunā lead a final kīrtana. The next day Prabhupāda wrote to a Dr. Shyam Sundar das Brahmācari in India: "I spoke for about one hour, and after that they continued clapping, which confirms their appreciation."

At the second Conway Hall engagement, when Prabhupāda stood during the kīrtana and began to dance, the devotees onstage joined him, dancing in a circle. Īśāna played his trumpet, and even Sarasvatī, her diapers showing beneath her short dress, jumped up and down in ecstasy. Each week would bring another Conway Hall meeting, and Prabhupāda's dancing became a regular feature.

One night at Conway Hall an Englishman stood and asked, "Why is it you don't try to help the people of your own country? Why did you come so far? Why don't you simply approach the big politicians? There are big politicians to try to help there."

Prabhupāda: "You are a great politician. Therefore, I am approaching you. Is that all right?"

Another man asked: "If this is the absolute truth, how come there's so many people in London but not so many people are in attendance here?"

Prabhupāda: "When you are selling diamonds, you don't expect many customers. But if you are giving cut glass, the fools will come. We have a very precious thing—this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Don't expect that all the foolish people will take to it. Some sincere souls have come. You please also take it."

Prabhupāda felt encouraged by the response of the English. Regularly the audiences would join in the chanting and dancing.

In London things are going on nicely, and last evening we had a meeting in Conway Hall and several hundred persons were joining us in chanting and dancing. After the meeting one reporter from the biggest London newspaper came behind the stage to get further information about our movement for publication in his paper. So I am very encouraged to see the nice reception that the people and the news medias are giving to our activities in London.

Late in October Prabhupāda spoke at the English Speakers Union to a predominantly Indian audience.

He began his talk, "Although we are a small gathering today, this is a very important meeting. India has got a message. You are all respectable Indians present here in an important city of the world,

London, and I have come here with an important mission. It is not the same mission as Indians generally have who come here and to other foreign countries—to beg something. I have come here to give something. So you please try to cooperate with me."

On October 30 Prabhupāda lectured at Oxford Town Hall. His talk was basic, although embellished with more Sanskrit quotes than usual. His disciples had not expected much of a response from the Oxford students, yet the hall was filled. And when Prabhupāda stood and gestured for everyone to raise their hands and dance, practically the entire audience responded. While Mukunda played the huge pipe organ and hundreds joined the chanting, Prabhupāda held his arms high and began powerfully jumping up and down.

Yesterday we had a very successful meeting at Oxford at the Town Hall. About 350 boys, girls, old men, ladies and gentlemen participated and we made them all dance and chant with us, every one. After the meeting, many boys and gentlemen came to congratulate me.

Prabhupāda received an invitation to appear on Britain's most popular TV talk show, "Late Night Line-Up." The interviewer, accustomed to snappy repartee, tried to engage Prabhupāda in his style of conversing, avoiding long, philosophical answers.

"Swamiji," he asked, "do you have a concept of hell in your religion?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "London is hell."

The host appeared stunned, as if beaten at his own game from the start. Prabhupāda continued, "It is always damp, cloudy, and raining. In India the sun is always shining."

The interviewer was still at a loss for words, and Prabhupāda, perhaps sensing the man's embarrassment, added, "Of course, it is a very great credit to the English people to have established such a great civilization in such a climate."

There were other questions, and Prabhupāda talked for an hour, explaining the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and philosophy. The next day a London newspaper announced, "Swami Calls London Hell."

The "Hare Krishna Mantra" record was still high on the charts in England and throughout the continent, and this fame led a Dutch television company to invite Prabhupāda's disciples to Amsterdam, all expenses paid, to do a show. They would have only five minutes of air time, but Prabhupāda accepted it. "Five minutes," he said, "is sufficient. We will preach the whole philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in five minutes."

Prabhupāda and his party took the ferry from Dover across the English Channel to France and then traveled by train to Amsterdam. The television studio, located outside the city, was in a modern, air-conditioned building, with constant loudspeaker announcements, artificial plants, a TV in every room—but no windows.

The receptionist brought Prabhupāda and his disciples to a windowless room with painted concrete walls. "In India," Prabhupāda said, "we wouldn't consider living in a place without windows and fresh air. I want to sit by a window." So the devotees checked through the entire building until finally, in the third-floor hallway, they found a window. Moving their chairs with them, they went with Prabhupāda and sat by the window.

"By the year 2000, no one will see the light of day," Prabhupāda said. "Cities will be forced to live underground. They will have artificial light and food, but no sunlight."

The producer of the program arrived, surprised to find that "the Swami" was also going to be part of the act. The surprise was a pleasant one, and he welcomed Prabhupāda to his show. "Now, what I want you and your group to do," he explained, "is to sing your record, 'Hare Krishna Mantra.' You don't have to actually sing out loud. We're going to play your record, and you mime. Pretend you're playing those instruments. Pretend you're singing." He allowed that afterward Prabhupāda could speak—for two minutes.

Just before Prabhupāda and the devotees went onstage, they had to wait in the wings while a local Dutch group danced around, pretending to play their saxophones, trumpets, and drums. Then the producer brought in a table with a cushion on it for Prabhupāda and seated the devotees around Prabhupāda on the floor.

The cameras began, the record played, and the devotees started to mime. Suddenly clouds, produced by dry ice, rolled in on the set—a "mystical" effect. As the devotees disappeared under clouds of carbon di oxide, only Prabhupāda remained clearly visible. Seeing the special effect unsuccessful, the producer motioned the devotees to stand and dance beside the Swami.

The song ended, and a camera closed in on Prabhupāda. "Now you have two minutes, Swamiji," the producer said. Prabhupāda began.

"We have been chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. This is a transcendental sound vibration, nondifferent from the Lord. The Lord's name and His form are the same. Please chant this sublime sound, and your life will become perfect. You'll become happy, and you'll realize your true nature—that you are an eternal servant of God, Kṛṣṇa. This process is called bhakti-yoga, and we request everyone to take to this chanting. Thank you very much."

Prabhupāda was pleased as his disciples' record continued to be a hit in Europe.

The Hare Krishna record is selling very nicely. Yesterday, it sold 5,000 copies, and this week it is on the chronological list as 20. They say next week it will come to be 3, and after that it may come to 1. So they are very much hopeful of this record.

To Satsvarūpa in Boston Prabhupāda wrote,

The Hare Krishna record is going on in England nicely, and I heard that in Australia it stands 4th on the list of 50 important records.

"Hare Krishna Mantra" became the number one song in West Germany, number one in Czechoslovakia, and among the top ten all over Europe and even in Japan. With the income from the record, the devotees began paying their bills and financing the renovations of the Bury Place temple.

Sometimes the devotees would perform at concerts with professional groups, and sometimes they would receive invitations to appear in nightclubs. After one particularly late and nasty nightclub engagement, Yamunā went to Prabhupāda and told him what the place had been like. Prabhupāda called for all the devotees. "These places," he explained, "are not good for brahmacārīs. The principle is that we have to make devotees. So we have to think where we are going. If we are going somewhere to preach but we can't make any devotees there, what is the use? So we have to think like that." He said he wasn't forbidding them to preach in the nightclubs, but he told them to be careful.

One of the devotees asked if showing slides of Kṛṣṇa mixed in with psychedelic slides was permissible. Prabhupāda said no. Kṛṣṇa should be on a throne or an altar. If they watered Kṛṣṇa consciousness down, it would become idol worship.

Not since Prabhupāda had first left India in 1965 had he preached to Indians as extensively as now. Indians would always attend his lectures, and even if they didn't dance and chant they appreciated Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even before Prabhupāda's arrival in England, a few Indians had stepped forward to help the devotees, and now the majority of Prabhupāda's occasional guests at Tittenhurst were Indians. Bringing their families, they would sit and chat with Prabhupāda, often inviting him to their homes for dinner.

Kedar Nath Gupta: Prabhupāda agreed to come to our house. We received him with a warm welcome, and many other people also came to hear him. He was very much pleased to see that we had our family Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, given by my mother. And he commented, "I am very much pleased to come to this place and see that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are here.

He gave a very nice lecture and told that the purpose of the human form of life is self-realization. He said one should be inquisitive to know who he is. All those assembled who had come to hear him were very much pleased and impressed by his lecture. After his lecture, I did the āratī, and we offered the foodstuffs to the Deity. And then we distributed prasādam to everyone. Prabhupāda took the prasādam, and he was very much pleased to take prasādam in our house. As he was leaving I requested him, "When can I see you next?" He said, "You can see me any time you want."

Sometimes there would be disagreements over philosophy, but Prabhupāda's arguments were always convincing. The Indians were respectful to Prabhupāda and repeatedly invited him to their homes. One of Britain's most prominent and respected Indians visited, Praful Patel, as did many businessmen with the means to help Prabhupāda's mission. But few were willing to sacrifice.

The second moon landing by American astronauts was scheduled for mid-November, only a few weeks away. For months the moon shots had received much press coverage, and Prabhupāda would speak of them often. Almost a year ago in Los Angeles he had answered a reporter's queries on the possibility of man's landing on the moon: "Just like we are going from one place to another by motorcar or by airplane, this mechanical process will not help us go to the moon planet. The process is different, as described in the Vedic literature. One has to qualify. According to our literature, our information, it is not possible. In this body we cannot go there."

At Tittenhurst Prabhupāda often brought up the moon landing while talking with his disciples. "The moon landing was a hoax," he said one evening in his room, "for they cannot go to the moon. The moon planet, Candraloka, is a residence of the demigods, higher beings than these drunkards and cow-eating slaughterers who are trying to inhabit it. You cannot think this travel is allowed—like when I migrated from India to the U.S. The moon planet cannot be visited so quickly. It is not possible."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples accepted his statements. He was giving not simply his opinion but the verdict of the Vedic scriptures. Because he accepted Vedic authority over modern science, so did his disciples—but not Puruṣottama.

Detecting Puruṣottama's dubious mentality, Prabhupāda would often joke lightly in Puruṣottama's presence. Someone would ask a question—"Where is Jānakī?"—and Prabhupāda would reply, "Oh, Jānakī has gone to the moon." Then everyone, except Puruṣottama, would laugh.

The devotees knew of Puruṣottama's difficulty—he was an American, and proud that the Americans were conquering space—and they knew that Prabhupāda was joking about it. Puruṣottama was up on the latest scientific advancements. He was impressed by NASA's achievements and astronaut Neil Armstrong's "giant step for mankind."

Although Puruṣottama went on with his duties, he became sullen, and Prabhupāda noted his lack of enthusiasm. One morning Puruṣottama and Yamunā were together with Prabhupāda in his room. Puruṣottama had several day's growth of beard and was wearing the same orange sweater he had slept in, whereas Yamunā was neat and clean. Although she had only two simple cotton sārīs, she would always put on a freshly washed and ironed one before going to see Prabhupāda. Looking at his two servants, Prabhupāda said, "Yamunā, you have so many sārīs. They are all so beautiful."

Yamunā looked up at Prabhupāda in surprise. "I don't have so many, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"No," he said, "you are wearing a new piece of cloth every day. It's so nice. You're always looking so neat and clean—and your tilaka. Puruṣottama, what do you think? Who do you think has the best tilaka?" Puruṣottama didn't answer. "Beautiful tilaka," Prabhupāda said, "means beautiful person."

About six o'clock that same evening, Yamunā was cooking purīs and potatoes for Prabhupāda when she heard him ring the servant's bell. Leaving the ghee on the fire, she ran up to Prabhupāda's quarters. He talked with her about the lecture he would give that evening and eventually asked, "When will prasādam be ready—before the discourse?"

"Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I'm..." Yamunā smelled smoke. "Oh!" she gasped. "Please excuse me, Prabhupāda! I've left some ghee on the fire!" Rushing downstairs, she found the kitchen filled with black smoke. She couldn't see the stove. "Puruṣottama! Puruṣottama!" she cried. Puruṣottama arrived, and together they groped through the smoke. Somehow Puruṣottama extinguished the fire before it caused serious damage.

Puruṣottama and Yamunā were covered with soot. Their faces were black, and Puruṣottama's orange sweater, his robes, and Yamunā's sārī were all blackened. Suddenly Prabhupāda rang the servant's bell, and they both hurried upstairs to tell him about the fire. When Jānakī returned downstairs and saw the mess, she ran upstairs to Prabhupāda's room, where Yamunā and Puruṣottama stood, still covered with soot, before Prabhupāda.

"What has happened here?" Jānakī burst out.

Prabhupāda looked at her soberly and said, "Today Puruṣottama has gone to the moon."

"What?" Jānakī asked.

Prabhupāda repeated, "Yes, our Puruṣottama has gone to the moon."

"Prabhupāda," Puruṣottama said, "I am a brahmacārī. Why are you saying these things?"

"Being a brahmacārī is no restriction from going to the moon. Anyone can go," Prabhupāda said, winking.

* * *

The devotees regularly encountered John and Yoko. Although originally interested in a business relationship, John was inclined toward the devotees, but his friends advised him not to get involved with the Swami and his group. So he remained aloof.

Īśāna dāsa: I was in the kitchen working, and John was sitting at the piano. He had a piano in the kitchen, a great upright piano with all the varnish removed—bare wood. And in this way he was sitting at the piano, playing Hare Kṛṣṇa. The man was actually a great musician, and he played Hare Kṛṣṇa in every musical idiom you could think of—bluegrass music or classical music or rock-and-roll or whatever. He would go at will from one idiom to another, always singing Hare Kṛṣṇa. It was so natural for him, and one could see that he was a musical genius. And in this way he was entertaining me, and he was obviously really enjoying it. So anyway, while this piano-playing was going on with great vigor and enthusiasm, this chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, his wife, Yoko Ono, appeared in a nightgown or what have you and said, in a very distressed tone, "Please, John, I have a terrible headache. Can't you stop that sort of thing and come upstairs with me?"

George was different. He was drawn to Prabhupāda. When one of the devotees had asked, "Why out of all the Beatles are only you interested?" George had replied, "It's my karma. One of the things in my sign is the spiritual side."

George Harrison: Prabhupāda just looked like I thought he would. I had like a mixed feeling of fear and awe about meeting him. That's what I liked about later on after meeting him more—I felt that he was just more like a friend. I felt relaxed. It was much better than at first, because I hadn't been able to tell what he was saying and I wasn't sure if I was too worldly to even be there. But later I relaxed and felt much more at ease with him, and he was very warm towards me. He wouldn't talk differently to me than to anybody else. He was always just speaking about Kṛṣṇa, and it was coincidental who happened to be there. Whenever you saw him, he would always be the same. It wasn't like one time he would tell you to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and then the next time say, "Oh, no, I made a mistake." He was always the same.

Seeing him was always a pleasure. Sometimes I would drop by, thinking I wasn't planning to go but I better go because I ought to, and I would always come away just feeling so good I was conscious that he was taking a personal interest in me. It was always a pleasure.

George was attracted to Kṛṣṇa, and he liked to chant. Even before meeting Prabhupāda, he had learned something of Kṛṣṇa from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, from the autobiography of Paramahansa Yogananda, and from traveling in India. But Prabhupāda's instructions in particular impressed upon him that Lord Kṛṣṇa was the Absolute Truth, the origin of everything.

George: Prabhupāda helped me to realize the multifaceted way to approach Kṛṣṇa. Like the prasādam, for example. I think it is a very important thing, prasādam, even if it's only a trick. Like they say, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Well, even if it's a way to a man's spirit soul, it works. Because there is nothing better than having been dancing and singing or just sitting and talking and then suddenly they give you some food. It's like it's a blessing. And then when you learn to touch Him or taste Him, it's important.

Kṛṣṇa is not limited. And just by Prabhupāda's being there and pouring out all this information, I was moved. It's like the mind is stubborn, but it's all Kṛṣṇa. That's all you need to know—it's all Kṛṣṇa. This world is His material energy too—the universal form. And in Prabhupāda's books there are these pictures showing Kṛṣṇa in the heart of a dog and a cow and a human being. It helps you to realize that Kṛṣṇa is within everybody.

Although Prabhupāda might have been teaching some higher aspect, what came through to me a lot was a greater understanding of how Kṛṣṇa is everywhere and in everything. Prabhupāda explained about the different aspects of Kṛṣṇa, and he provided a meditation where you could see Kṛṣṇa as a person everywhere. I mean, there isn't anything that isn't Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda saw George as a "nice young boy," and a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. According to the Bhāgavatam, no matter what a person may be materially, if he is a nondevotee and never utters the holy name of God he cannot possess any good qualities. Many swamis and yogīs in India, even some who considered themselves Vaiṣṇavas, had no faith in or understanding of the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. But George liked to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and he had put the holy name of Kṛṣṇa in his songs, which were tremendously popular all over the world. So he was serving Kṛṣṇa through his music, and that made all the difference.

Mr. George Harrison appears to be a very intelligent boy, and he is, by the Grace of Krishna fortunate also. On the first day, he came to see me along with John Lennon, and we had talks about 2 hours. He wanted to talk with me more, but he has now gone to his sick mother in Liverpool.

Prabhupāda also saw George as a rich man, and Lord Caitanya had strictly instructed devotees in the renounced order not to mix with worldly men. But Lord Caitanya had also taught that a devotee should accept any favorable opportunity for propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

If this boy cooperates with our movement, it will be very nice impetus for after all, he is a monied man. These monied men have to be very cautiously dealt with in spiritual life. We have to sometimes deal with them on account of preaching work; otherwise, Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has strictly restricted to mix with them for Krishna Conscious people. But we get instruction from Rupa Goswami that whatever opportunity is favorable for pushing on Krishna Consciousness we should accept.

Prabhupāda dealt with George cautiously, but encouraged him to chant the Lord's name, take His prasādam, and surrender all his works to Him.

When the devotees in the U.S. heard of Prabhupāda's dealings with the Beatles, some of them exaggerated the closeness of the relationship, especially in the case of John Lennon. Prabhupāda heard of this and immediately stopped it.

Regarding the booklet you and Gargamuni are sending, in the introductory portion signed by you and Gargamuni you have said that I am “personally instructing John Lennon and George Harrison in the yoga of ecstasy.” This is not very satisfactory. Of course, George Harrison sometimes comes to see me and naturally I instruct him on the bhakti yoga. But the statement in the letter gives hint as if I have been invited by them for this. If this comes to their notice, they may take some objection which will not go to our credit. These things should not be publicly advertised, and I do not know why this has been done. Anyway, if you have not distributed many of them, you just try to take out the portion which is not a fact.

George: Prabhupāda never really suggested that I shouldn't do what I was doing. I heard that at different times he would say to the devotees that I was a better devotee because of my songs and the other things I was doing. He never actually said that to me, but I always heard that. And the good thing for me was that I didn't have a feeling that I needed to join full time. I think it would have spoiled it if he had always been on at me, saying, “Why don't you pack in doing what you are doing and go and live in a temple somewhere?” He never made me feel any different, like I wasn't quite in the club. He was never like that.

I'm a plainclothes devotee. It's like that. I saw my relationship—that I should help when and where I could, because I know people in society. It's like any half-decent person; you just try and help each other a little bit.

He was always pleased with me, because anything I did was a help. I mean not just to the Kṛṣṇa temple as such, but just to anything spiritual that I did, either through songs or whatever—it pleased him. He was just always very friendly. He was always chanting, and at times he said that to

me—just to keep chanting all the time, or as much as possible. I think once you do that, you realize the chanting is of benefit.

There are some gurus who go around making out that they are “it,” but Prabhupāda was saying, “I am the servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa,” which is really what it is, you know. He wasn't saying, “I am the greatest,” and “I am God,” and all that. With him it was only in the context of being a servant, and I liked that a lot. I think it's part of the spiritual thing. The more they know, then the more they actually know that they are the servant. And the less they know, the more they think they are actually God's gift to mankind.

So although he was obviously a very powerful individual, very spiritually advanced, he always retained that humbleness. And I think that is one of the most important things, because you learn—more than all the words he says—you learn really from the example of how he lives and what he does.

* * *

The Daily Sketch reported, “Krishna people dine out at John and Yoko's place.” A photograph showed the devotees seated out of doors, taking prasādam.

Lunch time at Tittenhurst Park, stately home of John Lennon and Yoko Ono—and some of the Lennon's house guests take their places in yesterday's sunshine.

The picnickers are followers of the Indian Swami, His Divine Grace Abhay Charan Bhaktivedanta.

They have adopted the ways of the East, from their clothes and shaven heads right down to the Indian curry they eat with their fingers.

Which is all rather out of character for a place like Tittenhurst Park, which cost John # 150,000 and covers sixty acres of most exclusive Sunninghill near Royal Ascot race course.

Prabhupāda and his people and John and Yoko and theirs made an odd combination. Two days after Prabhupāda's arrival at Tittenhurst, John and Yoko had flown to Canada to perform with the Plastic Ono Band at Toronto's Rock-N-Roll Revival at Varsity Stadium. In October John and Yoko had recorded Wedding Album and begun work on a film, Rock-and-Roll Circus, and John had recorded “Cold Turkey.” Although John was usually shy, the devotees working at the main house found him openhearted and generous with his possessions. He invited the devotees to stay permanently at Tittenhurst and farm. Whatever he had, he said, he would share with them.

One day Yoko asked Yamunā if a devotee couple could stand in for her and John onstage at a London theater. She and John had previously appeared there dressed in only a burlap bag and were supposed to make another appearance, but Yoko thought perhaps a devotee couple could take their place. The crowd, she said, might never know the difference, and even if they did, it would be a hilarious publicity stunt for the devotees. Politely declining, Yamunā explained why devotees could never do such a thing. When she told Prabhupāda, he was adamant: none of his disciples would go. For days afterward, he condemned this sensuality.

John invited Prabhupāda to the manor to hear his recent recording of "Cold Turkey." Although such a song held little interest for Prabhupāda, John whimsically wanted him to hear it. Taking the opportunity to preach to the great man of the world, Prabhupāda went. Within John's main sitting room, Prabhupāda sat on the couch before the fireplace. The tape was ready on the large sixteen-track machine that had recorded it, and as Prabhupāda sat patiently, John began to work the controls.

But the machine wouldn't play. John began cursing under his breath, turning knobs and pushing buttons. Although only Puruṣottama had accompanied Prabhupāda, two other devotees hid outside beneath the windows, listening. When they peeked in and saw John struggling with the machine, they began giggling in the shadows.

"Oh," Prabhupāda said, "so your machine is not working. Well, never mind. We have also made some recording, and we would like to play this music for your pleasure." John resigned himself to listening to Prabhupāda's singing, and Prabhupāda was saved from the "Cold Turkey."

Prabhupāda kept his visit short. As he was leaving, he saw on the wall framed, life-size photos of John and Yoko naked. He also saw black and white silhouettes of a man and woman in various positions of sexual intercourse. On returning to his room, he commented, "It is not good for us to continue staying here." He asked Mukunda to find him an apartment in London. The Bury Place renovations were still incomplete, and Prabhupāda said he preferred to be in the city so that he could oversee the work. The natural setting of Tittenhurst was pleasant, but Prabhupāda's hosts' way of life and his were incompatible.

One day John and Yoko, dressed in black, came to visit Prabhupāda. Acknowledging him to be a great yogī with mystic power, they asked him to use his powers to arrange with Kṛṣṇa that they be reunited after death. Prabhupāda was disappointed.

"This is not my business," he said. "Kṛṣṇa provides you with life, and He takes it away in the form of death. It is impossible that you can be united after death. When you go back home, back to Godhead, you can be united with Kṛṣṇa. But husband and wife—this is simply a mundane relationship. It ends with the body at the time of death. You cannot pick up this kind of relationship again after death."

* * *

At one end of the estate lived a bricklayer and his wife in a small, neglected Georgian house. Hired by John to build a recording studio on the property, the bricklayer had only recently moved to Tittenhurst. A tough, burly man, he never spoke to the devotees, until one day he asked several of them if they believed in ghosts.

"Oh, yes," Kulaśekhara said. "Prabhupāda says there are ghosts." "I don't believe," the bricklayer said. "My wife is having dreams, but I don't believe in ghosts."

The bricklayer's wife revealed that both she and her husband had been hearing "something" at night. Last night they had gone running to John Lennon's house, terrified, complaining of sounds: chains rattling, boot heels pounding, and the noise of something "like a body being dragged across the floor." The bricklayer had seen his wife violently shaken by the shoulders, although no one else was there.

When the devotees told Prabhupāda, he said, "You tell John Lennon that if he wants we can get rid of these ghosts." Mukunda relayed the message, but John had already invited his friend, a white witch, to come and exorcise the ghost.

The warlock visited the bricklayer's cottage, and a few devotees tagged along. Over the fireplace in the main room they found a carving of a person with a ghost coming out of his forehead, and on the opposite wall, mahogany runes. "These are ancient witch runes," the warlock said, shaking his head. "I can't do anything here."

When John asked the devotees to try their method, Prabhupāda directed them. At the bricklayer's cottage they should sprinkle water offered to Kṛṣṇa in the doorways, blow conchshells, and then have kīrtana. A group of devotees went, and Kulaśekhara led the kīrtana. After half an hour of chanting, Kulaśekhara felt a great release of pressure within the room, and the kīrtana became ecstatic. The devotees returned to their engagements, assuring John that the ghosts would not return, and the bricklayer and his wife moved in again.

The next morning Prabhupāda passed the old cottage on his walk. "So, how is the ghost?" he asked.

"No news, Prabhupāda," Kulaśekhara replied.

The following morning Prabhupāda again asked, "How is the ghost? Would they like to have him back?"

Years ago in India, Prabhupāda said, when he was running his chemical business, he had detected ghosts in the building at night.

"What did you do?" one of the devotees asked.

"I simply chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, and the ghosts would go away." Prabhupāda then opened his eyes wide and gestured with both hands, mimicking the frightened workers in the plant who had come running to him: "Bābājī! Bābājī! There is ghost! There is ghost!" The devotees laughed.

"Actually," Prabhupāda said, "there are many ghosts here. Especially over by the stable areas. They are attached to this place. But they will not harm you if you just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

* * *

Prabhupāda was anxious to leave Tittenhurst, and by late October some of the devotees had moved to Bury Place. Prabhupāda no longer had any business at Tittenhurst. Mr. Lennon was an

influential person who had seemed interested in Kṛṣṇa, but now there was no point in Prabhupāda's staying on at the estate.

Yoko and her ex-husband, Dan, now John's manager, were also pressing John to be rid of the devotees. Dan complained that the devotees were trying to take over the place. The devotees, on the other hand, complained to John that Dan and Yoko were misrepresenting them. On one side were Dan and Yoko, on the other the devotees. John was in the middle; he had to choose.

John told Mukunda that as far as he was concerned he got along fine with the devotees, but the people around him were having difficulty. He would give the devotees a couple more weeks to move to their new temple in the city. The devotees were already in the process of moving to Bury Place, and Mukunda had found an apartment for Prabhupāda a short drive from the temple. In a few days everything would be ready for Prabhupāda to move.

On the day Prabhupāda left Tittenhurst, he stopped at his car and said, "I want to say good-bye to a few friends first." He then took a last walk through the grounds, giving careful attention to the trees, sometimes touching their leaves, just as on his morning walks. Then he left. The next day a severe storm swept through the Tittenhurst estate, breaking windows and uprooting trees.

* * *

November 3, 1969

Prabhupāda moved into his furnished apartment on Baker Street, a ten-minute drive from the Bury Place temple. After two months in London, he was anxious to see his temple open, and Śyāmasundara was working hard, although progressing slowly.

For the temple's interior Śyāmasundara had an artistic concept taken from photographs he had seen of the Ajanta Caves, South Indian temples with walls and ceilings of carved stone. His inspiration was to produce a similar effect using California redwood he and Mukunda had shipped to England a year ago. On first hearing the plans, Prabhupāda had asked, "Why make it so artistic?" But Śyāmasundara had been so set on the idea that Prabhupāda had permitted him. With the ceiling partly finished, there was no turning back.

Śyāmasundara toiled day and night, yet each day the temple design seemed to grow more elaborate, with the walls and floor fashioned of solid redwood and the ceiling lined with redwood arches. Śyāmasundara took great care to see that each piece fit exactly into place. As Śyāmasundara inched along, devotees joked that the room looked like an upside-down boat. But Prabhupāda encouraged him, telling him it was very beautiful.

Prabhupāda often allowed his disciples to work as they liked. He reasoned that they were raising the money and could spend it in Kṛṣṇa's service as they pleased. He also did not care to interfere in every detail of a disciple's service, especially when that disciple was strongheaded and had ideas that were not harmful or obstructive. All Prabhupāda's disciples were ultimately under his absolute decision, but he was often lenient—"eighty-percent lenient," he would sometimes say.

Śyāmasundara particularly thrived on having his own big projects. He had arranged for the Mantra-Rock Dance in San Francisco, built the first Ratha-yātrā carts, established a friendship with George Harrison, and now he was designing a temple. Prabhupāda allowed it—watchfully, like a father.

Consulting the Vedic calendar, Prabhupāda chose December 14 for the temple-opening celebration. And despite predictions from Śyāmasundara and others that the deadline would be impossible to meet, Prabhupāda ordered invitations printed immediately. The devotees had tremendous work to do, and little time. Not only did they have the temple to complete, but also Prabhupāda's quarters on the second floor and the kitchen in the basement. Faced with their tight deadline, they worked harder.

As Prabhupāda was anxious about the temple opening, he was also anxious about publishing the first volume of Kṛṣṇa. But he had no money.

According to printers' estimates, the book would cost about \$ 19,000. Prabhupāda told Śyāmasundara to ask his friend George for a donation. Śyāmasundara, who had always been careful not to ask George for money, was hesitant. But Prabhupāda insisted, and Śyāmasundara gave in.

George agreed, but regretted it afterward. Then Śyāmasundara began to feel sorry. After all, he hadn't really wanted to ask George, and George hadn't really wanted to be asked. When Prabhupāda heard of this, he invited George to see him.

George told Prabhupāda that every day people were asking him for his money. But when Prabhupāda explained the importance of the Kṛṣṇa book and how George's donation would be devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, George dismissed his regrets. He also agreed to write a foreword to the volume.

George: I didn't really think I was qualified to write the foreword to Prabhupāda's book. But one way of looking at it is, because I am known, it would help. But from the other point of view, it could really hinder, because not everyone wants to listen or to believe what I say. There are a lot of people who would be put off just because I'm saying it. I mean, if I picked up a book on Kṛṣṇa and the foreword was written by Frank Zappa or somebody like that, I would think, "God, maybe I don't want to know about it."

So I thought that although he asked me, maybe Prabhupāda didn't really want me to write the foreword. But it was one of those things I couldn't get out of: Everybody had their minds made up, "You're writing the foreword, and that's it." So I just did it.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda asked to watch the moon landing, the devotees rented a television and placed it in Prabhupāda's living room. Prabhu pāda took his massage as usual, sitting in a chair before the television.

Puruṣottama announced, "Well, Prabhupāda, it's about time, so I'll turn on the television, and soon we'll be getting some pictures from the astronauts out in space."

A reporter was speaking from Cape Canaveral, Florida: "We are just about to get the first pictures of this historic occasion." The picture appeared fuzzy, then cleared. The spacecraft had landed on the moon. As the astronauts emerged from the ship, they slowly eased themselves down onto the moon's surface. Puruṣottama was in ecstasy.

Dhanañjaya: I was attempting to massage Prabhupāda's head and at the same time watch the program. All of a sudden, as the men were landing, Prabhupāda motioned for me to sit in front of him, so I came around. As soon as I sat down, Prabhupāda started to massage my head. I was quite embarrassed. "You have forgotten how to massage properly?" he asked. "This is how you do it." He massaged my head for about two minutes.

Then I stood behind Prabhupāda and again began massaging his head. By this time, the astronauts were moving across the landscape. They had gotten out their little American flag and were sticking it in the ground and were jumping up and down. Apparently they were defying gravity, because every time they jumped up they would float through the air and then gently land again. There was a lot of jubilation and sounds from them.

"So, Puruṣottama," Prabhupāda asked, "they have come to the moon?"

"Yes, Prabhupāda," Puruṣottama said excitedly. "They've landed on the moon!"

Prabhupāda smiled.

Dhanañjaya: Again, Prabhupāda motioned me to the front. I moved around and sat down. I thought he wanted me to massage him from the front. But again he put his hands on my head and massaged. He said, "Can't you learn this simple thing, massaging my head?" I had been watching the television and not giving my full attention to my service. I tried again, but again Prabhupāda said, "You still don't know how to do this." I said, "Well, Prabhupāda, I am trying my hardest." He laughed and said, "That is all right. Continue."

Prabhupāda asked Puruṣottama, "So, what can you see?"

"They're exploring the moon's surface," he said.

"So, what is there?"

"Well, it looks like they have landed inside a crater somewhere, and the ground is sandy with some rocks. Oh, look, they're showing some shadows from some of the rocks that are lying around!"

"That's all you can see? There are no people? There are no trees? There are no rivers? There are no buildings?"

"No," Puruṣottama replied. "The moon is barren."

"They have not landed on the moon," Prabhupāda said emphatically. "This is not the moon."

Later when Mālatī brought in Prabhupāda's lunch, he said, "What Mālatī has done, she has made this little kicharī for Kṛṣṇa, and that is far greater than what they have done."

Even though Prabhupāda's quarters were incomplete and temple renovation made 7 Bury Place noisy and hectic, Prabhupāda decided to move in. "I am not attached to a comfortable apartment," he said. "My attachment is to living in the association of devotees." He was moving into the temple at a time when the record sales were low and the devotees were having to purchase supplies piecemeal, whenever they got money. Yet with Prabhupāda living with them and supervising their work, they were satisfied.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa arrived from Los Angeles, and in addition to supervising much of the construction, he began taking the devotees out daily to chant on the streets and sell Back to Godhead magazines. Yamunā was sewing curtains from morning until night. Īśāna, Śyāmasundara, and others were working every possible hour on the renovation. And every day Prabhupāda would walk through the building to see the progress.

With only one week left until the opening, Śyāmasundara still labored on the temple ceiling. He had not even begun the altar. Again the other devotees complained to Prabhupāda that Śyāmasundara was too slow, but Prabhupāda replied, "He wants to make it artistic. Let him do it."

Śyāmasundara, this time on his own, asked George for a donation for an altar. George gave two thousand pounds, and Śyāmasundara picked out a slab of golden sienna marble and two slabs of red marble. Although Prabhupāda had a pair of seventeen-inch carved wood Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, he didn't plan to use Them. And the size of the altar Śyāmasundara was building clearly required larger Deities.

One day a Mr. Doyal phoned, representing a large London Hindu society. He had heard the devotees wanted Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, and he had a pair he would donate. When Prabhupāda heard the news, he sent Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Mukunda, and Śyāmasundara to Mr. Doyal's home to see the Deities.

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were white marble and stood about three feet high. Never before had the devotees seen such large Deities, and they offered obeisances. When they returned to the temple and told Prabhupāda, he said, "Take me there at once!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda, accompanied by Śyāmasundara, Mukunda, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, arrived by van at Mr. Doyal's home. Prabhupāda entered the living room and sat down. The Deities, covered by a cloth, stood on a table in the corner. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was about to unveil Them when Prabhupāda checked him: "No. That's all right." Prabhupāda sat and spoke with Mr. Doyal, asking him about his work and where he had come from in India, and he met Mr. Doyal's family. Prabhupāda and his host chatted while the devotees listened.

"Swamiji," Mr. Doyal said at length, "I want to show you my Deities."

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, "I will see Them after some time."

Prabhupāda began to speak about his Kṛṣṇa consciousness mission, and after a while Mr. Doyal again requested, "Please take a look at these Deities." And with that he walked over and unveiled Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

"Oh, yes," Prabhupāda said, folding his hands respectfully. Mr. Doyal explained that he had ordered the Deities from India for his own use, but in transit a tiny piece of Rādhārāṇī's finger had chipped off; therefore, according to Hindu tradition, the Deities could not be installed.

"Tamāla Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda said. "See how heavy these Deities are."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, placing one hand at Rādhārāṇī's base and the other around Her shoulder, lifted Her. "Not so heavy," he said.

"Śyāmasundara," Prabhupāda said. "See how heavy is Kṛṣṇa." The Deities were actually heavy for one man to carry, but the devotees understood Prabhupāda's intention.

"Not bad," Śyāmasundara said, holding Kṛṣṇa a few inches off the table.

"Yes," Prabhupāda said conclusively, "I think They're all right. Let us take Them. We have our van." And suddenly Prabhupāda was leaving, with his disciples following, carefully carrying Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda thanked Mr. Doyal.

"But Swamiji! Swamiji!" protested Mr. Doyal, who was not prepared for this sudden exit. "Please, we will arrange to bring Them. Our society will bring Them." But Prabhupāda was already out the door and leading his men to the van.

"Please wait," Mr. Doyal persisted. "We have to fix Them first, then you can take Them."

"We have an expert man," Prabhupāda said. "He can fix these things." Prabhupāda was assuring Mr. Doyal and at the same time directing his disciples. He opened the door of the van, and Śyāmasundara and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa slowly entered, cautiously setting Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa within. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa knelt in the back to hold the Deities secure, while Śyāmasundara got into the driver's seat.

"Now drive," Prabhupāda said. And off they went, with Prabhupāda smiling from the window to Mr. Doyal and his family, who stood together on the curb.

Śyāmasundara had driven but a few blocks when Prabhupāda asked him to stop the van. Turning around in his seat, Prabhupāda began offering prayers: Govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi... He looked long at Kṛṣṇa, who was white with a slight bluish cast, and at the exquisite white Rādhārāṇī by His side. "Kṛṣṇa is so kind," he said. "He has come like this." Then he had Śyāmasundara continue driving slowly back to the temple.

Carefully, Prabhupāda supervised his disciples' carrying the Deities up to the second floor. The devotees were astounded and delighted to see Prabhupāda in such an animated and intense state,

bringing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa into Their temple. He had the Deities placed in a curtained-off section of his own room, and then he sat at his desk.

Prabhupāda smiled. "Kṛṣṇa has played a great trick." In the Mahābhārata also, he said, there are incidents where Kṛṣṇa plays tricks. One such trick was Kṛṣṇa's agreeing to be on the side of the general He saw first in the morning. The two opposing generals, Arjuna and Duryodhana, had both come to Kṛṣṇa's tent early in the morning as Kṛṣṇa slept. They had agreed that one of them would stand at Kṛṣṇa's head and the other at Kṛṣṇa's feet and that they would wait until Kṛṣṇa awoke. Duryodhana chose to stand by Kṛṣṇa's head, while Arjuna chose His feet. Kṛṣṇa awoke and saw Arjuna.

"That was one great trick that was played by Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda said. "Similarly, this is a great trick." He told how Kṛṣṇa had also tricked Mother Yaśodā when she had tried to discipline Kṛṣṇa. He had run away, and she had run after Him, caught Him, and tried to tie Him with ropes. "But every time she came with more rope," Prabhupāda said, "it was just a little too short. Kṛṣṇa can play any kind of trick. Another such trick has been played. They made so much effort to bring these Deities here, thinking They will be for their Hindu Centre. But all the time Kṛṣṇa wanted to come here. So this chip on the Deity's hand is just Kṛṣṇa's trick. And we have caught Them."

"Prabhupāda," Mukunda said, "you kidnapped Kṛṣṇa."

"Yes," Prabhupāda said. "Once I was in the bank, and the manager had some scheme. But I foiled his scheme. So he said to me, 'Mr. De, you should have been a politician.'" Prabhupāda laughed. Then he became grave and asked the devotees not to talk about the incident. Many people would not understand how he could install a chipped Deity. The devotees agreed to keep the secret, but they had no doubt that Prabhupāda's love for Kṛṣṇa was transcendental to Hindu customs; Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had come to London on Prabhupāda's desire.

"How do you dress big Deities like this?" Yamunā asked. "They already have clothes on."

Prabhupāda said, "You bring me some cloth."

"What kind of cloth, Prabhupāda? What should the clothes look like?"

"Like in the pictures," he replied.

"Well, there are so many different pictures," she said. "Sometimes Kṛṣṇa has a ruffled skirt on, and sometimes He has a dhotī on, and sometimes He has a big crown on."

"Kṛṣṇa looks very beautiful in saffron," Prabhupāda said. "So you bring me some silk dhotīs in yellow and saffron color."

Yamunā collected six silk sārīs with silver and gold borders, and Prabhupāda indicated the design he wanted and told Yamunā how to arrange the crowns. With only a few days remaining before the installation ceremony, Yamunā began working almost continuously at her sewing machine. Several times a day Prabhupāda would come to see her progress.

Śyāmasundara had completed most of the altar, except for Lord Jagannātha's altar and the canopy over Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's throne. Both the canopy and Lord Jagannātha's altar would be supported by four heavy wooden columns more than six feet high. Two rear columns would hold a marble slab for the Jagannātha deities to stand on, and two front columns were now supporting Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's large velvet canopy. The columns were big and heavy; Śyāmasundara called them "elephant-leg columns." The columns now stood in place on the altar, although Śyāmasundara hadn't had a chance to secure them. The day before the installation Śyāmasundara collapsed upstairs in exhaustion.

On opening day many guests, Indians especially, crowded the temple, responding to flyers and advertisements. Apple Records had supplied a professional florist, who had decorated the room with floral arrangements. A BBC television crew was on hand to videotape the ceremony. While most of the devotees held kīrtana, Prabhupāda, behind a curtain at the other end of the temple, bathed Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

The plan was that after the bathing ceremony the Deities would be placed on the altar and Yamunā would dress Them. Once they were dressed and enthroned, the curtain would open for all the guests to behold Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda would lecture, and then everyone would feast. But because of Śyāmasundara's oversight, the installation almost became a disaster.

Prabhupāda had finished bathing the Deities and They had been placed on the marble altar, when suddenly the "elephant-leg columns" tottered. The canopy above the Deities began to collapse. Prabhupāda, seeing the danger, jumped onto the altar and seized the heavy columns in a split second. With great strength he held the two front pillars in place. "Get this out of here!" he shouted. While Prabhupāda's arms protected the Deities, the men removed the canopy, and then two men at a time carried each of the pillars away. The Deities remained unharmed.

While Prabhupāda was behind the curtain rescuing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, on the other side of the curtain guests and reporters awaited the unveiling of the Deities. Unaware of the mishap, the guests saw only men emerging from behind the curtain carrying large pillars and a canopy. The BBC camera crew began filming the canopy and pillars as they appeared from behind the curtain, taking them to be part of a ceremonial procession.

The few devotees behind the curtain with Prabhupāda were amazed. But there was no time now for apologies or appreciations. Yamunā dressed the Deities, Prabhupāda hurrying her. When at last everything was ready, Prabhupāda opened the main curtain, revealing the graceful forms of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī to the temple full of guests. A devotee began to offer āratī, while Prabhupāda, wearing a saffron cādar and a garland of carnations, stood to one side, reverentially looking upon Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as their worshiper and protector.

This was the culmination of months of effort. Actually, years of planning had preceded this auspicious occasion. One hundred years before, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had hoped for the day when Kṛṣṇa consciousness would come to England, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had also desired it. Now that an authorized temple of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in London, it was a historic occasion for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism; a long-standing order of the previous

ācāryas had been fulfilled. Prabhupāda had sent invitations to several of his Godbrothers in India. None of them had been able to come, of course, but at least they should have been pleased to learn that this dream of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's had been fulfilled.

Prabhupāda was seventy-three. He had now opened twenty-one temples in three years. Recently he had told some of his disciples that they should try to form a governing body for ISKCON, to relieve him of the management and allow him to concentrate fully on presenting Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. This literature could be introduced all over the world into homes, schools, and colleges for the benefit of everyone. It would be in such literature that he would live on. How much time he had left in this world he didn't know, he said, but he wanted to go on serving and trying to please his Guru Mahārāja, life after life.

Nevertheless, despite Prabhupāda's desire to retire from active work and absorb himself in writing books, here he was installing Deities in a new temple and protecting Them from his disciples' carelessness. Had he not been present, the celebration would have been a disaster. So many hardworking disciples, and they still needed his personal guidance.

ISKCON was just beginning to grow. Prabhupāda wanted to open not just twenty-one temples, but at least 108. His world traveling and book printing were just beginning, and, like everything else, the number of disciples would increase. The prestige of his movement would increase, and with it opposition from the atheists. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was growing, and Prabhupāda was in the forefront. "All around I see bright," he said. "That is the glory of Kṛṣṇa." He saw himself as a servant of his spiritual master; the bright future was in Kṛṣṇa's hands.

Prabhupāda called for Śyāmasundara. Although Prabhupāda was angry at first because of the near-disaster on the altar, he admitted that his disciples had done their best. The temple was beautiful, he told Śyāmasundara; he liked it. He then asked that a sign be placed out front with gold letters on a blue background:

RADHA-KRISHNA TEMPLE

This temple was constructed with great labor and effort

by Shyamasundar das Adhikary

On the day of Prabhupāda's departure from London, he distributed some of his personal effects, such as sweaters and scarves, to his disciples. He then went downstairs alone into the temple to see the Deities. He offered fully prostrated obeisances on the floor for a long time and then stood, looking at Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Yamunā: Prabhupāda was looking at the Deities with complete devotion. He loved those Deities. He had commented about Their exquisite beauty and how They complemented each other—how sometimes Rādhārāṇī looked more beautiful but how Kṛṣṇa's moonlike face and eyes were shining. Prabhupāda saw me and matter-of-factly said, "If you practice what I have taught you and follow

the instructions of how I have taught you to worship the Deity, and if you read the books that we have printed, it is sufficient for you to go back to Godhead. You need not learn anything new. Simply practice what I have taught you, and your life will be perfect." Then he left—just left.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

A Threat Against ISKCON

= Boston

December 21, 1969

More than one hundred of Prabhupāda's disciples and followers are in the lobby of the International Terminal of Boston's Logan Airport. Kīrtanānanda Swami has come from New Vrindaban with a truckload of devotees. The devotees from New York are here with a large banner: NEW YORK ISKCON WELCOMES ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA. Most of the devotees wear heavy coats over their dhotīs and sārīs and are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa; some play drums and cymbals. A few babies and children are present. Waiting passengers can only watch, startled.

Prabhupāda's plane is late, and the devotees continue chanting, often leaping into the air with outstretched arms. They haven't seen Prabhupāda in a long time, and they are waiting, expecting to see him at any moment. Oblivious of the proprieties of being in public, the devotees chant emotionally, building almost to uncontrolled ecstasy. The state police step in to tell the biggest devotee, Brahmānanda, "Cool it!" The chanting falls away to a murmur of japa: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The plane from London arrives! The devotees are unable to see the passengers entering in the glassed-in immigration and customs area because the bottom six feet of the glass wall is painted black. Straining to see over the top, the devotees press forward, chanting, feverish, some almost hysterical. Suddenly they see Prabhupāda's raised hand with bead bag on the other side of the wall! They can see only his raised hand and bead bag. They go wild.

Fearlessly, with drums and karatālas, the kīrtana explodes again: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Advaita is tearfully smashing the karatālas together and chanting. Brahmānanda, jumping up and down, trying to glimpse into the customs room, is crying uncontrollably and yelling, "Prabhupāda! Prabhupāda!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda, free of customs, suddenly appears before them. Kīrtanānanda Swami, reserved until now, leaps around airport chairs and runs to him. Everyone is pushing and running, trying to be where Prabhupāda is.

Prabhupāda's saffron robes are wrinkled from the long flight, and he wears a knit sweater. He holds his white plastic attache case in his left hand and again raises his right arm with forefinger and thumb extended from the bead bag. He smiles wonderfully, beaming to his children. Devotees cheer and cry: "All glories to Prabhupāda!"

As he walks toward a saffron-covered sofa in the airport lounge, the devotees move with him in an ecstatic wave, pressing in close. He sits down. Paramānanda, from New Vrindaban, comes forward with his infant son, the first boy born in ISKCON, and holds him forward to Prabhupāda for blessings. Prabhupāda is smiling, and the devotees are completely, unabashedly blissful.

"Where is Hayagrīva?" Prabhupāda asks. The question is repeated by the devotees, and big Hayagrīva lurches through the crowd, grumbling and falling flat at Prabhupāda's feet in obeisance. One by one, the leaders of the various ISKCON centers come forward and place garland after garland around Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda looks beyond the wall of devotees at the newsmen with their cameras and at the baffled, curious, and disdainful onlookers. A bystander says, "I think he must be some kind of politician."

"So"—Prabhupāda begins speaking—"the spiritual master is to be worshiped as God. But if he is thinking that he is God, then he is useless. My request is, please don't take Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a sectarian religion..." Prabhupāda explains that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a great science, culminating in pure love of God. "These boys and girls had never heard of Kṛṣṇa before," Prabhupāda continues, "but now they have taken it up so naturally—because it is natural." Prabhupāda says that he is an old man yet he is sure that even if he passes away his students will continue the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The potency of this movement is such that it can awaken awareness of God within anyone's heart. After the lecture Prabhupāda stands and is escorted outside, where a limousine waits to drive him off through the newly fallen snow.

Riding joyfully in the car with Prabhupāda were Kīrtanānanda Swami, Brahmānanda, Satsvarūpa, and Puruṣottama. A professional chauffeur drove. Prabhupāda talked of London. It was an old, aristocratic city, he said, and the temple was in a very influential area near the British Museum. "The location is—what it is called—downtown?"

They passed a large billboard advertising a restaurant and lounge: CONTINENTAL. On seeing the billboard, Prabhupāda said, "Cintāmaṇi—what is that? Oh, no, Continental."

The devotees looked at one another: "Cintāmaṇi." Prabhupāda had thought that the sign had read Cintāmaṇi, meaning the spiritual gems that make up the transcendental land of Kṛṣṇaloka. But Prabhupāda himself was cintāmaṇi, pure and innocent, coming to the cold, dirty city of Boston yet always thinking of Kṛṣṇa wherever he was. How fortunate to be with him! Satsvarūpa glanced at the professional chauffeur. "Drive carefully," he said.

Prabhupāda spoke softly from the back seat, while the devotees in front peered back, barely able to see him in the darkness and completely awed by his friendly yet inconceivable presence. "The other

day," he said, "I told George Harrison that if he thought his money belonged to him, that was māyā."

At the Summer Tunnel the limousine pulled up at an automatic toll booth. The driver threw a coin into the chute, and the red light turned green. Prabhupāda asked if sometimes people drove through without paying, and Brahmānanda replied that an alarm would go off. They moved ahead into the Summer Tunnel, usually an eerie, nerve-racking place—but not when riding with Prabhupāda.

"I told George to give his money to Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda said, "not that he had to give it to Kṛṣṇa by giving it to me, necessarily, but that somehow or other he must spend all of his money for Kṛṣṇa."

"But you are the only way to Kṛṣṇa," Brahmānanda said.

Prabhupāda laughed lightly. "Yes," he admitted, "at least in the West."

This was the great privilege of being able to ride with Prabhupāda: to hear him say little things or serious things and to see his fathomless expression or his kind smiling. It was a rare opportunity.

"I am representing unadulterated teachings," Prabhupāda continued. "Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad-gītā, 'Surrender to Me,' and I say, 'Surrender to Kṛṣṇa.' It is very simple. So many swamis come and present themselves as Kṛṣṇa, and it is all spoiled. But I say, 'Surrender to Kṛṣṇa.' I do not say anything new or adulterated. Kṛṣṇa says, 'Surrender to Me,' and I say, 'Surrender to Kṛṣṇa.'"

Prabhupāda asked Brahmānanda if fifty thousand copies of Back to Godhead magazine were being printed. Brahmānanda answered that they were. "Good," Prabhupāda replied. Turning his attention to Satsvarūpa, Prabhupāda asked how the composing machine was working, and Satsvarūpa said that hundreds of pages were being composed each month. Prabhupāda asked Kīrtanānanda Swami about New Vrindaban. New Vrindaban would improve, Prabhupāda said; the only thing wrong was that it got "blocked up" in the winter.

Each devotee in the car felt completely satisfied by his brief exchange with Prabhupāda, and they rode with him intoxicated in spiritual bliss.

Most of the devotees had raced ahead to the temple on Beacon Street and were waiting excitedly. The limousine pulled up, and again the devotees were unrestrained in their adoration of their spiritual master. Regally Prabhupāda walked up the walkway, onto the porch steps, through the front door, and into the vestibule, where he gazed around at the purple walls and the pink and green doorways. Surrounded by cheers and loving looks, he smiled.

The second-floor parlor, now the temple room, was filled with more than 150 disciples and guests, and they could see Prabhupāda's form rise into view as he came up the stairs. He still carried his white attache case in his left hand and his bead bag in his right. And although he had just come out of the winter's night, he wore no coat, only cotton robes and a sweater. He appeared radiant.

Prabhupāda approached the altar. He seemed to notice everything: the small Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities enthroned beneath a red velvet canopy, the larger deities of Jagannātha, Subhadra, and Balarāma on a raised shelf above the picture of Lord Caitanya and His saṅkīrtana party, even the brass āraṭi paraphernalia, brightly shining on the small table near the altar. Turning to his secretary and traveling companion, Puruṣottama, he asked, "What do you think, Puruṣottama? Isn't this very nice?"

Crossing the room, Prabhupāda sat on the red velvet vyāsāsana. He spoke, and the audience was attentive. After praising the London center, the Deity worship there, the expertly made purīs for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, he turned toward the altar and said, "If you clean the Deities' utensils, your heart will become cleansed." By polishing the Deities' paraphernalia, he said, the devotees were cleaning their spiritual master's heart also. As he spoke, focusing simply and purely on devotion to the Deity, the devotees suddenly realized the importance of this aspect of their Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Who has made these clothes?" Prabhupāda asked, glancing at Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's little flounced dresses.

"Śāradyā," a few devotees called out.

Prabhupāda smiled. "Thank you very much." Then he threw back his head and laughed. "Is Śāradyā still fighting with her husband?"

The devotees and guests laughed, while Śāradyā covered her face with her hands. "Don't fight with your husband," Prabhupāda said. "He is a good boy. Anybody that comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is good." He then asked to see the rest of the house.

A hundred devotees, straining to see and hear Prabhupāda's responses, followed him as he went downstairs. Although the crowd surrounded him, he remained relaxed and unhurried. He entered the press room, a long hall directly beneath the temple room. A large old offset press, a paper cutter, a folder, and flats of paper stock filled the room, which smelled like a print shop. Advaita, the press manager, bowed down in his green khakis before Prabhupāda. He rose up smiling, and Prabhupāda stepped forward and embraced him, putting his arm around Advaita's head. "Very good," he said.

Standing before the printing press, Prabhupāda folded his palms together and offered a prayer to his spiritual master: "Jaya Om Viṣṇupada Paramahansa Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda ki jaya!" Advaita asked Prabhupāda to give the press a transcendental name. "ISKCON Press," Prabhupāda said matter-of-factly, as if it had already been named.

"Keep all the machines very clean," Prabhupāda said, "and they will last a long time. This is the heart of ISKCON."

"You are the heart of ISKCON, Prabhupāda," a devotee said.

"And this is my heart," said Prabhupāda.

Leaving the main press room, Prabhupāda toured the other press facilities. Squeezing in, ducking under, standing on tiptoe, the crowd of devotees followed him step by step. He peeked into a little cubbyhole where a devotee was composing type. The typesetters, he said, should proceed very slowly at first, and in that way they would become expert. Turning to Advaita, he said, "Everyone in India who speaks Hindi has a Gītā Press publication. So everyone who speaks English should have an ISKCON Press publication."

Compared to most authors, Prabhupāda's literary contribution was already substantial. But he wasn't just "an author." His mission was to flood the world with literature glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's ISKCON was now three years old, yet his disciples were only beginning to execute his plans for printing and distributing transcendental literature.

Printing was an important step—the first step. Months ago Prabhupāda had written,

The press must work on continuously, and we shall produce immense volumes of literature. If the press goes on nicely, I shall be able to give you material for publishing a book every two months. We have got so much material for the Krishna consciousness movement.

And just prior to coming to Boston he had written,

Samkirtan and distributing Back to Godhead and our other literatures is the fieldwork of this movement. Temple worship is secondary.

Now ISKCON was printing fifty thousand copies of Back to Godhead per month, and Prabhupāda hoped to increase the sales more and more.

Standing in the crowded, chilly basement, surrounded by devotees, press machines, and transcendental literature, Prabhupāda described how he wanted ISKCON Press to operate. He said that after dictating a tape he would mail it to Boston to be transcribed. The transcription should take no more than two days. During the next two days, someone would edit the transcribed manuscript. Then another editor would take two days to edit the transcript a second time. A Sanskrit editor would add diacritical markings, and the manuscript would be ready for composing.

Prabhupāda said he could produce fifteen tapes—three hundred manuscript pages—every month. At that rate, ISKCON Press should produce a book every two months, or six books in a year. Prabhupāda wanted to print at least sixty books. Therefore his press workers would have plenty to do for the next ten years. If the devotees simply printed his books incessantly, he said, even if they had to work twenty-four hours a day in shifts, it would give him "great delight." He was ready, if necessary, to drop all his activities except for publishing books.

This was the special nectar the press devotees were hankering to hear. Printing books was Prabhupāda's heart; it was the thing most dear to him.

During Prabhupāda's week in Boston, Puruṣottama continued as secretary and servant, out of duty. His difficulties in London had increased. Doubtful and morose, he came before Prabhupāda two days before their departure.

Puruṣottama: I had decided to leave in London. I just felt like there were different things I wanted to do. But I felt obligated to stay with him because he needed me there. It was my job to at least get him back to the States. I felt that he needed someone to travel with him. And I just felt that I should complete that, have everything in order, so I couldn't say to myself that I had just quit when he needed me like that in a foreign country.

I didn't tell anybody. I didn't speak against him or anything. I performed my duties, but in my attitude I let him know I was really getting kind of distant the last few days. I didn't bow down to him. I would come in, but I just wouldn't bow down to him.

He entered Prabhupāda's room. He didn't bow down. He stood. He was too uncomfortable to sit, because of the gravity of what he would say. Prabhupāda looked up from his desk. "Yes, Puruṣottama?"

Puruṣottama: I went in to see him. I knew I was going to leave, and it kind of made me sick to do it. Anyway, I told him I have a lot of questions about the movement, the moon, and everything. I just don't believe all of this. He was very congenial about the whole thing. He took it nicely.

He said to me, "If you have questions, why don't you ask me?" And I said, "You yourself have said that we should only ask questions to somebody we feel we can believe or trust." He looked very hurt. He knew what I was saying. I felt like I really hurt him. I didn't mean it to be so defiant, but there I was.

He said, "I've noticed that you haven't been well lately. You've had some problems?"

I said, "Well, I haven't been trying to hide it." I guess I was trying to prepare him for what was coming. I wanted to leave that night. So I said, "I want to leave." But he said to me, "You've been with me so long, and now you're so anxious to go? You can't even stay a night?" He said, "Why don't you stay at least till my plane leaves." That was two days later. I said, "O.K., I'll do that then."

I was going to go back to New York. Actually I didn't have the money for the ticket, and he gave me the money, he gave me the bus fare. I really appreciated that. I could have borrowed some money from someone else, but he said, "Well, you take it, and you can pay me back later." And I did. I gave it back the next week.

He was very gracious about the whole thing. Actually I could see that he had a very special loving way of looking at the world. I felt that sometimes I could see things in a loving way, like he did, and I realized that I got that viewpoint from him—you know, that little loving spirit. He had that, and I kind of caught some of that from him. And that's one of the things I always remember about him. And I know that through his movement I came to believe in God. Before I met him, I didn't believe in God.

After Puruṣottama left, Prabhupāda spoke with Bhavānanda about Puruṣottama's doubts concerning the moon landing and his consequent doubts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "I can understand that he might not accept it because I said it, but how could he disbelieve the Vedic śāstras?"

Boston's weather was miserable. When the rain stopped, the snow fell, and when the snow stopped, the rain came again. Prabhupāda tried taking a walk in the front yard, Bhavānanda beside him with the umbrella, watching cautiously to guard him from falling on the ice. But after a week of Boston's nasty December weather, Prabhupāda's cold was getting worse. He would go to Los Angeles.

* * *

Los Angeles

February 25, 1970

On the auspicious occasion of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's appearance day anniversary, the Los Angeles devotees received permission to enter their new temple on Watseka Avenue. The rooms had not even been cleaned, and the large hall was bare; but the devotees brought in Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana from the old temple on La Cienaga, and Prabhupāda had them place on it a large picture of his spiritual master. Standing before his spiritual master, Prabhupāda offered āraṭi while some fifty disciples gathered around him, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and dancing in the otherwise empty hall.

After the āraṭi, Prabhupāda directed his disciples in offering flowers to the picture of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Then, still standing before the vyāsāsana, he said he had nothing to offer his spiritual master on this day except his own disciples. He then read aloud the names of all his disciples.

Taking his seat on a low vyāsāsana beside the large vyāsāsana of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Prabhupāda gave a short history of his Guru Mahārāja, son of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and powerful ācārya of the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. As Prabhupāda recalled his first meeting with his spiritual master, he told how Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had told him to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the English-speaking world. This large new temple, Prabhupāda said, had been provided by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as a gift for the devotees to use in Kṛṣṇa's service. They should not become attached to the opulence, Prabhupāda said, but they should use this wonderful place for preaching. As he spoke, he wept.

"Now bring them prasādam!" Prabhupāda called. And the feast began. While devotees sat on the floor in rows, Prabhupāda from his vyāsāsana directed the servers, having them bring another samosā to one devotee, more chutney to another, and so on. He watched over all of them, encouraging them to take Kṛṣṇa's prasādam.

That afternoon Prabhupāda toured the buildings. In addition to the main hall, which he would have the devotees convert into a temple, he saw the equally large lecture hall. These rooms, plus a three-room apartment, ample separate quarters for male and female devotees, a parking lot, and a

front lawn, made this the finest physical facility in all of ISKCON. "We don't require such a nice place for ourselves," Prabhupāda told the temple president, Gargamuni. "We are prepared to live anywhere. But such a nice place will give us opportunity to invite gentlemen to come and learn about this Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

The cost of the building had been \$225,000, with a \$50,000 down payment. Prabhupāda had had more than \$10,000 in his book fund, but that was exclusively for printing books. So although he usually didn't like to deal personally in such negotiations, he had made an exception in this case and had asked the other temples to donate to the new "world headquarters" in Los Angeles. He had even mailed snapshots of the buildings to various temple presidents around the world. Thus he had collected the down payment, and on Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's appearance day ISKCON became the legal owner.

This was the only temple ISKCON actually owned—all the other buildings were leased or rented—and Prabhupāda wanted to design everything himself. Hiring professionals would be too expensive, but Prabhupāda had plenty of disciples eager to do the renovation. Karandhara knew a little carpentry, plumbing, and general construction, and he could learn more by experience. Bhavānanda had been a professional designer, and he was filled with Prabhupāda's enthusiasm to transform the plain church into a dazzling palace for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "First you make my apartment," Prabhupāda told Bhavānanda. "Let me move in, and then we will work on the temple room."

Bhavānanda: We picked out a part of the Los Angeles temple for Prabhupāda's quarters, and Karandhara built a bathroom. When Prabhupāda came up to the rooms, he said, "This will be my sitting room. This will be my bedroom." And when he came to a third room, with a skylight, he said, "This will be my library."

Prabhupāda had told me once in Boston that as a child he had lived in a palace with blue walls, red marble floors, and orange and gold trim—the Mulliks' house in Calcutta. So we painted the walls of his sitting room blue, and I put in a white tile floor. The drapes were burnt-orange satin with gold cords and gold fringe. Prabhupāda liked this color scheme very much.

In the bedroom I asked Prabhupāda where he wanted his bed, and he said, "Put the bed in the middle of the room." We had put down a rug, and Prabhupāda said, "Now you should get sheets and cover the rug with them. In India they have rugs like this, nice rugs, and they cover them with sheets. And on special days they take the sheets off. Otherwise they would become ruined." So I went out and bought sheets.

Prabhupāda was in his sitting room when I came in and started putting the sheet over the rug in the bedroom. Prabhupāda came in and said, "Yes, this is very nice. Again I have introduced something new. This is something new for all of you—sheets on rugs." Then he told me, "Now make sure there are no wrinkles in the sheet." I was on my hands and knees on the rug, and Prabhupāda also got down on his hands and knees right next to me. We were both pressing out the wrinkles from the sheet, and when we got to the end, Prabhupāda folded the sheet under the rug.

He was very happy there, because it was our own place. We had never had our own place before.

In the temple room Prabhupāda showed Karandhara where to build the three altars. He indicated the measurements and instructed that before each altar should be a pair of doors and over them the symbols of Viṣṇu: a conchshell over the altar for guru and Gaurāṅga; a wheel and club over Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's altar in the center; and a lotus over Lord Jagannātha's. The spiritual master's vyāsāsana was to go at the opposite end of the temple, facing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The walls should be yellow, which Prabhupāda said was in the mode of goodness. The ceiling should be covered with a canopy, and there should be chandeliers.

Once the altars were completed, Prabhupāda wanted to bring the Deities, even though much of the renovation was yet unfinished. After constructing an umbrella-covered cart and decorating it with flowers, the devotees brought the Deities in procession from the old temple on La Cienaga Boulevard to Their new home.

Bhavānanda: The first time he came into the temple room after his morning walk, he went to the guru-Gaurāṅga altar and paid his obeisances. We all paid our obeisances. Then he stood up, and he went to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and then paid obeisances, then to Jagannātha, and we all followed. Then we walked back and he sat on his vyāsāsana, and he told us, "Now you line up facing each other from the vyāsāsana to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, face each other. This way, that way, one way you look is guru, and the other way God. And then back and forth that way. Always leave this aisle," he said, "so I can see."

The Deity was the king, Prabhupāda said, and all the temple residents were His personal servants. The temple, therefore, should be like a palace. An elaborate temple was important for preaching, Prabhupāda explained, because most people, especially Westerners, were not inclined to undergo any austerities for obtaining spiritual life. There was an Indian saying, No one listens to a poor man. Were the devotees to advertise classes on bhakti-yoga in such-and-such empty field under a certain tree, Prabhupāda said, no one would come. But a clean, beautiful building with chandeliers and comfortable rooms would attract many people to visit and become purified.

The temple was also for those who wanted to live there as Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. Devotees, Prabhupāda said, should be willing to live and sleep anywhere. But as the loving, protecting father of his disciples, Prabhupāda took great care to establish a large temple and an adequate dormitory facility. He was making a home for his family. To see that his spiritual children had a place to live and practice their devotional service was just another aspect of his mission.

A special feature of the new temple was Śrīla Prabhupāda's garden. The devotees had excavated a large patch of concrete behind the temple, filled it in with earth, surrounded it with a cinder-block wall, and planted a lawn with flower gardens all around.

Karandhara: I had dug some beds along the inside perimeter and planted a plant here and a plant there. But Prabhupāda said, "No, plant something everywhere. Everywhere there should be something growing. Everywhere there is a place, you plant something. Let there be growing everywhere." He wanted it overgrown like a jungle, a tropical area where plants just grow luxuriantly everywhere.

Śrīla Prabhupāda always enjoyed sitting in the garden in the evening with the fresh, cool evening air and the fragrance of the flowers. The topics of conversation in the garden were as varied as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—all different subjects. Sometimes there would be lively conversations with guests or devotees, and sometimes Prabhupāda would spend the entire time just chanting, with very little conversation. Sometimes Prabhupāda would just have somebody read from the Kṛṣṇa book.

Prabhupāda said that his mother maintained a garden on the roof of their house when he was young and that he would go up there in the evenings and play. He remembered that. He always remembered what he liked to do as a child. You would hear him reminisce with pleasure about it. Many times he would comment, “My mother maintained a garden on the roof of our residence, and as a child I would go there in the evening and play. Now I also have such a nice place to come.”

Under Prabhupāda's personal direction, the Los Angeles center became a model for the rest of ISKCON. At the morning Bhāgavatam class, for example, he had the devotees responsively chant the Sanskrit mantras after him, and he asked that this become the standard program in all his temples. In May 1970, he wrote to each of his twenty-six temple presidents throughout North America and Europe, inviting them to visit him at Los Angeles.

Now at the present moment, I am concentrating my energy in this Los Angeles Center as ideal for all other centers in respect of Deity worship, Arotrik, Kirtan and other necessary paraphernalia. As I have curtailed my moving program, I wish that you may come here at your convenience and stay here for a few days and see personally how things are going on; and by meeting with me personally for necessary instruction, I hope simultaneously in all Centers the activities will be of the same standard.

The temple presidents who visited Prabhupāda, most of them young men in their twenties, came with practical as well as philosophical questions. They came with their notebooks, writing down everything from the temple schedule to color schemes, noting the tunes used in the kīrtanas, learning how to manage a saṅkīrtana party. And perhaps most important of all, they would note the things Prabhupāda did and the words he spoke personally to them. The temple presidents would then return to their own centers—in Berkeley or Hamburg or Toronto or Sydney—glowing with ecstasy and ready to implement dozens of new standards they had imbibed from Prabhupāda at the Los Angeles world headquarters.

Although Prabhupāda still spoke of expanding his movement more and more, he seemed content to stay in Los Angeles, reaching the rest of the world through his temple presidents, his saṅkīrtana parties, and his books. New plans were unfolding, however, and Prabhupāda again spoke of a governing body, twelve hand-picked disciples to manage all of ISKCON's affairs. He also spoke of initiating more sannyāsīs and taking them with him to India to train as itinerant preachers. And to insure that his books were regularly and properly printed, he wanted to form a special committee in charge of book publication.

Sometimes managing his worldwide religious movement, sometimes leading the growing group of devotees in chanting Sanskrit mantras in the Los Angeles temple, and sometimes sitting alone and translating in the pre-dawn hours, Prabhupāda lived happily in Los Angeles.

One day a record arrived from London. The London devotees, who with George Harrison's help had already produced an album, had now also released a new single, "Govinda." The song consisted of verses Prabhupāda had taught them from *Brahma-saṁhitā*, each verse ending with the refrain *govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*. Prabhupāda asked that the record be played during the morning program in the temple. The next morning, after he had entered the temple room, bowed down before the Deity, and taken his seat on the *vyāsāsana* to begin the class, the record began.

Suddenly, Prabhupāda became stunned with ecstasy. His body shivered, and tears streamed from his eyes. The devotees, feeling a glimmer of their spiritual master's emotion, began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa as if chanting *japa*. The moments seemed to pass slowly. Finally Prabhupāda spoke: "Govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi." He was again silent. Then he asked, "Is everyone all right?" The response was a huge roar: "Jaya Prabhupāda!" And he began the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class.

* * *

Vaiṣṇavera *kriyā-mudrā vijñe nā bujhaya*. "No one can understand the mind of a Vaiṣṇava." Only a pure devotee can understand another pure devotee perfectly. But by observing the main activities of Prabhupāda's life, we can see that whatever he did was pure service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and was a perfect example of how to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. He taught by precept and by example. Often encouraging, even praising his disciples, he always pushed them into more and more participation in the blissful *saṅkīrtana* movement of Lord Caitanya. But he also exposed the faults of his disciples, and these faults were sometimes great and painful to see, both for him and for his disciples.

One day, as Prabhupāda came into his quarters at the Los Angeles temple, he saw that one of the devotees cleaning his room had placed his picture upside down. A simple mistake. But it indicated something wrong in the disciple's mentality. Every morning the devotees sing prayers to the spiritual master honoring him as the direct representative of God. How could any sincere disciple not notice that he is standing God's representative upside down?

Then a more serious discrepancy. Prabhupāda went to the temple, greeted the Deities, and went to take *caraṇāmṛta*, the scented water from the bathing of the Deities. It was part of his daily schedule. After his morning walk, he would return to the temple and offer obeisances to the Deities while the "Govinda" record was being played. A devotee would then offer him a few drops of *caraṇāmṛta* in his right palm, and he would sip it. He had mentioned this item of devotional service in *The Nectar of Devotion*. "Scented with perfumes and flowers, the water comes gliding down through His lotus feet and is collected and mixed with yogurt. In this way this *caraṇāmṛta* not only becomes very tastefully flavored, but also has tremendous spiritual value... The devotees who come to visit and offer respects to the Deity take three drops of *caraṇāmṛta* very submissively and feel themselves happy in transcendental bliss."

On this particular morning, however, as Śrīla Prabhupāda took *caraṇāmṛta*, he frowned. Someone had put salt in it! He walked the length of the temple room, took his seat on the *vyāsāsana*, and

before a room full of a hundred devotees, asked, "Who has put salt in the caraṇāmṛta?" A young girl in a sārī stood and with a nervous smile said she had done it.

"Why have you done it?" Prabhupāda asked gravely.

"I don't know," she giggled.

Prabhupāda turned to Gargamuni: "Get someone responsible."

Everyone present felt Prabhupāda's anger. The unpleasant moment marred the pure temple atmosphere. A disciple worships Kṛṣṇa by pleasing Kṛṣṇa's representative, the spiritual master; therefore to displease the spiritual master was a spiritual disqualification. The spiritual master was not merely a principle; he was a person—Śrīla Prabhupāda.

When ISKCON Press in Boston misprinted Prabhupāda's name on a new book, he became deeply disturbed. The small paperback chapter from the Second Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam bore his name on the cover as simply A. C. Bhaktivedanta. Omitted was the customary "His Divine Grace" as well as "Swami Prabhupāda." Śrīla Prabhupāda's name stood almost divested of spiritual significance. Another ISKCON Press publication described Prabhupāda as "ācārya" of ISKCON, although Prabhupāda had repeatedly emphasized that he was the founder-ācārya. There had been many ācāryas, or spiritual masters, and there would be many more; but His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda was the sole founder-ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

To make matters worse, when Prabhupāda first opened the new Bhāgavatam chapter, the binding cracked and the pages fell out. Prabhupāda glowered.

The devotees in Boston, hearing of Prabhupāda's anger, knew at once that their mistake in misprinting Śrīla Prabhupāda's name was a serious oversight. Minimizing the spiritual master's position was a grave offense, and they had even published the offense. The serious implications were difficult for the devotees to face, and they knew they would have to rectify their mentality before they could make spiritual progress. Prabhupāda criticized the mentality behind these mistakes, and his criticisms were instructive to his disciples. Unless he instructed them about the absolute position of the spiritual master, how would they learn?

At the beginning of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class one morning, Prabhupāda called on one of the women devotees: "Nandarāṇī." She stood respectfully. "Do you chant sixteen rounds every day?"

"Well, I try to, Prabhupāda."

"This is the problem," Prabhupāda said, turning to the temple president. If Nandarāṇī, one of the senior, responsible women, wasn't chanting regularly, then certainly the new women under her weren't either. This was the managers' fault. Prabhupāda had praised and encouraged his disciples for laboring hard to renovate the temple and for going out daily into the streets to chant and distribute magazines. But for a devotee to not chant the prescribed rounds was to neglect the most important instruction.

What Nandarāṇī hadn't said was that the temple authorities had told her that chanting all her sixteen rounds wasn't necessary, as long as she worked. They had told her this, even though Prabhupāda clearly instructed his disciples at initiation to always chant at least sixteen rounds daily.

Then another incident. During the morning class, Prabhupāda was discussing Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, an associate of Lord Caitanya. Looking among the devotees, he asked, "Who can tell me who is Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya?" No one spoke. Prabhupāda waited. "None of you can tell me who is Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya?" he asked. One girl raised her hand; she had "read something about him"—that was all.

"Aren't you ashamed?" Prabhupāda looked at the men. "You should be the leaders. If the men cannot advance, then the women cannot advance. You must be brāhmaṇas. Then your wives will be brāhmaṇas. But if you are not brāhmaṇas, then what can they do?" Without improving their chanting and without reading Kṛṣṇa conscious literature, Prabhupāda said, they would never attain the purity necessary for preaching Lord Caitanya's message.

While the local anomalies were weighing heavily on Śrīla Prabhupāda, he learned of strange things his disciples in India had written in their letters, and he became more disturbed. One letter to devotees in America reported that Prabhupāda's Godbrothers in India objected to his title Prabhupāda. According to them, only Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī should be called Prabhupāda, and they referred to Prabhupāda as "Swami Mahārāja." Prabhupāda also learned that some of his disciples were saying he was not the only spiritual master. They were interested in reading Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's books—as if to discover some new teaching Prabhupāda had not yet revealed.

Prabhupāda regarded these remarks as dangerous for ISKCON. Advancement in spiritual life was based on implicit faith in the spiritual master, and to Prabhupāda these new ideas indicated a relative conception, as opposed to the absolute conception, of the spiritual master. Such a conception could destroy all he had established; at least, it could destroy the spiritual life of anyone who held it.

Though sometimes ignorant, his disciples, he knew, were not malicious. Yet these letters from India carried a spiritual disease transmitted by several of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers to his disciples there. Prabhupāda had already been troubled when some of his Godbrothers had refused to help him secure land in Māyāpur, the birthplace of Lord Caitanya. Although he had asked them to help his inexperienced disciples purchase land, they had not complied. In fact, some of them had worked against him. Prabhupāda had written to one of his Godbrothers, "I am so sorry to learn that there is a sort of conspiracy by some of our Godbrothers as not to give me a place at Māyāpur."

Prabhupāda was sensitive to any threat to ISKCON. His accepting the name Prabhupāda, his teaching that the disciple must approach the spiritual master as the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa, without attempting to jump over him to the previous spiritual masters—these things he had carefully explained to his disciples. But now a few irresponsibly spoken remarks in India were weakening the faith of some of his disciples. Perhaps this insidious contamination that was now

spreading had precipitated the blunders at ISKCON Press and even the discrepancies in Los Angeles. Talks about the relative position of the spiritual master could only be the workings of *māyā*, the Lord's illusory energy. *Māyā* was attempting to bewilder the devotees of ISKCON. That was her job: to lead the conditioned souls away from Kṛṣṇa's service.

The recent events began to hamper Prabhupāda's writing. He had been working quickly in Los Angeles and had recently finished the second and final volume of Kṛṣṇa. And on the very tape on which he had dictated the last chapter of Kṛṣṇa, he had immediately begun a summary of the Eleventh Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Gradually, however, his writing stopped.

Karandhara: Prabhupāda's translating would require a great deal of concentration. He would have two or three of his big Bhāgavatam volumes opened up and sometimes a number of other small books, which he would refer to for something or other. He would sit, wearing his glasses and speaking into his dictating machine, and he would be completely absorbed in reading. Sometimes he would make a brief note, then look into one of his books, then open another book, turn back to another page, make a note, and then dictate. It required a great deal of concentration. I think that's why Prabhupāda did most of it at night, after he would rise from his late evening nap. From one or two in the morning until six or seven in the morning he would be absorbed. It was quiet at that time, and he could become absorbed.

But when Prabhupāda became disturbed about the problems in ISKCON, it inhibited his work. He was spending his time discussing with visiting devotees or myself or whoever was there. Then he would spend more time thinking matters over or pondering the problem, and he wouldn't be able to concentrate on his translating. These difficulties disturbed him, and he would think about them and say, "I have not been able to concentrate. I have been thinking about this problem."

Although the spiritual master suffers for his disciples' mistakes, Prabhupāda's perspective was not simply negative. He continued chanting and lecturing in the temple and inviting the leaders of his movement to visit him in the ideal center of Los Angeles; but he also corrected the diseased mentality wherever it appeared. When, for example, Guru dāsa wrote from London to say that they had allowed an Indian guest to lecture in the temple while sitting on Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana, Prabhupāda immediately wrote back, correcting him.

I am surprised how you allowed Mr. Parikh to sit on the Vyāsāsana. You know that Vyāsāsana is meant for the representative of Vyāsadeva, the Spiritual Master, but Mr. Parikh does not come in the Parampara to become the representative of Vyas, neither does he have any sound knowledge of Vaiṣṇava principles. I understand from your letter that sometimes discussions on Aurobindo philosophy are done by Mr. Parikh from the Vyāsāsana, so I am a little surprised how did you allow like this. I think you should rectify immediately all these mistakes as stated by you in the last two lines of your letter, "I think the best thing to do is to stop his class. Nonsense ought not to be tolerated."

In a letter from Paris, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked Prabhupāda philosophical questions about the perfection of the spiritual master, and Prabhupāda answered fully, but sternly.

A Spiritual Master is always liberated. In any condition of His life He should not be mistaken as an ordinary human being. This position of the Spiritual Master is achieved by three processes. One is called sadhan siddha. That means one who is liberated by executing the regulative principles of devotional service. Another is kripa siddha, one who is liberated by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa or His devotee. And another is nitya siddha who is never forgetful of Kṛṣṇa throughout his whole life. These are the three features of the perfection of life.

So far Nārada Muni is concerned, in His previous life He was a maidservant's son, but by the mercy of the devotees He later on became siddha and next life He appeared as Nārada with complete freedom to move anywhere by the grace of the Lord. So even though he was in His previous life a maidservant's son there was no impediment in the achievement of His perfect spiritual life. Similarly any living entity who is conditioned can achieve the perfectional stage of life by the above mentioned processes and the vivid example is Nārada Muni.

So I do not know why you have asked about my previous life. Whether I was subjected to the laws of material nature? So, even though accepting that I was subjected to the laws of material nature, does it hamper in my becoming Spiritual Master? What is your opinion? From the life of Nārada Muni it is distinct that although He was a conditioned soul in His previous life, there was no impediment of His becoming the Spiritual Master. This law is applicable not only to the Spiritual Master, but to every living entity.

So far I am concerned, I cannot say what I was in my previous life, but one great astrologer calculated that I was previously a physician and my life was sinless. Besides that, to corroborate the statement of Bhagavad-gītā “sucinam srimatam gehe yogabhṛasta 'bhijayate,” which means an unfinished yogī takes birth in rich family or born of a suci or pious father. By the grace of Krishna I got these two opportunities in the present life to be born of a pious father and brought up in one of the richest, aristocratic families of Calcutta (Kasinatha Mullik). The Radha Krishna Deity in this family called me to meet Him, and therefore last time when I was in Calcutta, I stayed in that temple along with my American disciples. Although I had immense opportunities to indulge in the four principles of sinful life because I was connected with a very aristocratic family, Krishna always saved me, and throughout my whole life I do not know what is illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating or gambling. So far my present life is concerned, I do not remember any part of my life when I was forgetful of Krishna.

Prabhupāda thought some of his leaders had become entangled in ISKCON management and were trying to gain control for themselves. In the classes he would speak of this only indirectly, as he had when he had exposed that the devotees weren't chanting and reading enough. Consequently, most devotees were unaware of Prabhupāda's anxiety. But occasionally, while sitting in his room or in the garden, Prabhupāda would express his concern. He wanted his disciples to manage ISKCON, but to do so they must be pure. Only then would he be able to concentrate on writing books. In June he wrote to Brahmānanda,

Now my desire is that I completely devote my time in the matter of writing and translating books, and arrangement should now be done that our Society be managed automatically. I think we should have a central governing body for dealing with important matters. I have already talked with

Gargamuni about this. So if you come back by the Rathayatra festival, we can have a preliminary meeting at San Francisco in this connection.

* * *

In July Prabhupāda visited San Francisco for the fourth annual ISKCON Ratha-yātrā. It was the biggest festival ever, with ten thousand people joining in the procession through Golden Gate Park to the beach. Prabhupāda felt ill and didn't join the parade until about midway. He danced in the road before the carts, as a hundred disciples encircled him, chanting and playing karatālas and mṛdaṅgas.

Afterward, Prabhupāda wanted to ride in the cart, just as he had done the year before, but some of his disciples restrained him. A gang of hoodlums, they said, had caused trouble earlier, and for Prabhupāda to ride on the cart might be dangerous. He disagreed, but finally relented and rode in his car to the beach.

At The Family Dog Auditorium on the beach Prabhupāda began his lecture. "I want to thank you all for coming. Although I am not well, I felt it my responsibility to come, as you have so kindly attended Lord Jagannātha's Ratha-yātrā festival. I felt it my duty to come and see you and address you." His voice was frail.

Later in his apartment in San Francisco, Prabhupāda complained that he had not been allowed to ride in the cart. As leader of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, he should have ridden on the cart. Not only had his disciples refused him, but several disciples had prominently ridden on the cart—as if in his place.

Prabhupāda asked the many temple presidents assembled for the Ratha-yātrā to meet and discuss forming a governing body to manage ISKCON. The devotees met and then reported that they thought only one of them should be elected the chief representative.

They hadn't understood. The strength should be in a group, Prabhupāda said, not in a single individual. Since he was ISKCON's founder-ācārya, what need was there for another single leader? He asked them to meet again.

* * *

Returning to Los Angeles, Prabhupāda announced he would award several of his disciples the sannyāsa order. The devotee community excitedly prepared for the festival. The sannyāsīs, Prabhupāda said, would leave their temples to travel and preach. It was an unprecedented change for ISKCON, a sensation, and the devotees loved it.

Although Prabhupāda was awarding sannyāsa to some of his most advanced disciples, he also said the sannyāsa initiation was to purify these disciples and to rid them of their entanglement in material desires. He set the initiation for the end of July, two weeks later.

One day in Los Angeles, a visiting devotee speaking with Prabhupāda in his room humbly asked why Prabhupāda hadn't answered his questions in a recent letter. Prabhupāda remembered no such letter. Inquiring from his secretary, Prabhupāda discovered that his secretary often showed incoming letters to certain temple leaders, who at their discretion would sometimes withhold letters they considered petty or too disturbing.

Prabhupāda was outraged. How dare they come between him and his other disciples? How could they presume to make such decisions on their own? How could a disciple censor his spiritual master's mail?

Although Prabhupāda reprimanded the devotees involved, the incident only increased the already heavy burden on his mind. Again the thought of spiritual disease transmitted in letters from India disturbed him. He found no one close to him in Los Angeles with whom he could speak confidentially about this serious minimization of the spiritual master. As his anxiety affected him bodily, he fell ill and stopped eating.

Karandhara: I'd heard some things, but in the spirit of "going on" it had all been glossed over. And Prabhupāda didn't talk much about it either. One time, though, I was in his room, right after the sannyāsīs had left Los Angeles, and he asked me if I understood what had gone on. I said, "Well, I think so." But I didn't really know very much.

At that time the devotees who were going out on sankīrtana were in the alleyway chanting, and Prabhupāda was at his desk. Hearing the kīrtana, he turned back, looking in the direction of the devotees below his window, and smiled. Then he turned to me. "They're innocent," he said. "Do not involve them in this business."

Karandhara still didn't understand, and he wondered what not to involve them in. He did know, however, that a shadow was hanging over the heads of the sannyāsīs.

Prabhupāda requested three trusted disciples to come be with him in Los Angeles.

Rūpānuga: I was in Buffalo and the phone rang. Someone said, "Śrīla Prabhupāda is on the telephone." I said, "What? You're kidding!" It wasn't Śrīla Prabhupāda, but it was his servant, Devānanda. Devānanda said, "Śrīla Prabhupāda wants you to come to Los Angeles." I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "Well, he doesn't want..." Then he said, "Śrīla Prabhupāda wants to talk about it now."

So Śrīla Prabhupāda got on the phone, and as soon as I heard him on the line, I paid my obeisances. Then I said, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, what's wrong?" He said, "You didn't know I was ill?" I said, "No!" He said, "You should come immediately."

Then I said, "Uh... uh... Śrīla Prabhupāda, let me speak to Devānanda." I didn't know what was going on, so I asked Devānanda, "Tell me what's going on." Then he said, "Śrīla Prabhupāda said he will talk with you when you come. He will explain everything."

Bhagavān dāsa: One day after coming back from saṅkīrtana, I received a call from Rūpānuga, who told me he was on his way to Los Angeles, having received a call from Prabhupāda that there was some disturbance there. He couldn't tell me more, but he said he would call me when he returned.

This set my mind reeling. I sat in the chair, hot and sweaty after coming back from saṅkīrtana, my mind absorbed in thinking of Prabhupāda and what could be going on. I called Los Angeles to talk to Prabhupāda's secretary, Devānanda, who told me he couldn't really say anything at that point. I was hoping somehow or other I would get more information of the situation, but after waiting some time, I went in to take my shower.

I was in the shower when all of a sudden someone banged on the door. "Prabhupāda is on the telephone. He wants to speak with you." I was sure there was some misunderstanding—how is it possible that the spiritual master could be on the telephone? Anyway, I ran out of the shower, all wet, and picked up the telephone and said, "Hello?"

There was a long pause. Then all of a sudden I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda's voice on the other end: "Bhagavān dāsa?"

"Yes," I said. "Śrīla Prabhupāda, please accept my humble obeisances. How can I serve you?" I was completely stunned. Then Prabhupāda's voice came slowly on the phone, "There are many things that you will do, but the first thing is that you must come here immediately." I said, "Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I will be there right away." And with that we both hung up.

I managed to gather the money together to take the flight to Los Angeles. And when I got on the plane in Detroit, it just so happened that Rūpānuga was also on the same plane. We sat together and discussed what could possibly be happening in Los Angeles to cause Śrīla Prabhupāda so much distress.

When we arrived at the airport, Karandhara picked us up and told us that some of the older devotees had been plotting against Prabhupāda and that that day Prabhupāda had given several of the men sannyāsa and sent them away to preach. This was all quite amazing to me, and I didn't really know what to make of it.

When we came into Prabhupāda's room, he looked distressed and was rubbing his head, complaining of the blood pressure that was caused by the conspiracy.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: I had written Śrīla Prabhupāda a lengthy letter from Paris, describing how we wanted to expand our preaching efforts in Europe, and suddenly I received a telegram from His Divine Grace that said, "Received your letter 26 July. Come Los Angeles immediately." I was quite surprised, and I remember disentangling myself that very day and leaving that night, even though I was in charge of the activities there.

When I arrived in Los Angeles, I found Rūpānuga, Bhagavān, Kīrtanānanda Swami, and Karandhara. I was in a very enthusiastic, blissful mood from having done so much saṅkīrtana, and I had no idea of any difficulty. But these devotees were all in a heavy, sober, somber mood, and they

tried to explain to me what was going on. But actually I could not get a very clear understanding. I had arrived in the late afternoon, and I could not see Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Early the next morning, when Prabhupāda was informed that I had arrived, he called for me before maṅgala-ārati. I went up to his quarters, and when I came through the door, Prabhupāda was sitting in his room with his head downward. He looked up, and he appeared to be almost ill. He was gaunt and looked very sorrowful. He said meekly, just as I was bowing down, "Have they told you?"

Of course, I hadn't really understood everything, but in reply to his question I said, "Yes, they have told me some things." And Prabhupāda said, "Can you help me?" So I answered, "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda." He said, "Can you take me out of here?" I said, "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Of course, I didn't feel that I could help Śrīla Prabhupāda, but I could understand that I had to say yes. How can you say, "No, I won't"? But how far could I help? It's like lifting the heaviest object in the world. The guru is so heavy, and yet I had to say yes.

So Prabhupāda asked me next, "Where will you take me?" And I said, "Well, we can go to Florida." He said, "No, that is not far enough." I said, "I could take you to Europe." He said, "No, that also will not be good. The problem may be there also." So anyway, we didn't conclude where to go at that time. But Prabhupāda said, "It is like a fire here. I must leave at once. It has become like a fire."

Prabhupāda confided in Rūpānuga, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, and Bhagavān about the various incidents: his mail withheld, his name misprinted, his riding in the Ratha-yātrā parade restricted. He mentioned these and other indications that certain persons wanted to move him into the background, out of the reach of his disciples. He didn't want to stay in Los Angeles, he didn't want to stay in the United States, he didn't even want to go to Europe. He wanted to leave the arena of his disciples' offenses. But before leaving, he wanted to complete his plans for establishing a governing body to manage ISKCON. To this end he dictated the following on July 28:

I, the undersigned, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, disciple of Om Visnupad Paramhansa 108 Sri Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Gosvami Maharaj Prabhupāda, came in the United States in 1965 on September 18th for the purpose of starting Krishna Consciousness Movement. For one year I had no shelter. I was travelling in many parts of this country. Then in 1966, July, I incorporated this Society under the name and style the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, briefly ISKCON... Gradually the Society increased, and one after another branches were opened. Now we have got thirty-four (34) branches enlisted herewith. As we have increased our volume of activities, now I think a Governing Body Commission (hereinafter referred to as the G.B.C.) should be established. I am getting old, 75 years old, therefore at any time I may be out of the scene, therefore I think it is necessary to give instruction to my disciples how they shall manage the whole institution. They are already managing individual centers represented by one president, one secretary and one treasurer, and in my opinion they are doing nice. But we want still more improvement in the standard of Temple management, propaganda for Krishna consciousness, distribution of books and literatures, opening of new centers and educating devotees to the right standard. Therefore, I have decided to adopt the following principles and I hope my beloved disciples will kindly accept them.

Prabhupāda then listed the names of the twelve persons who would form the G.B.C.:

1. Śrīmān Rupanuga Das Adhikary
2. Śrīmān Bhagavandas Adhikary
3. Śrīmān Syamsundar Das Adhikary
4. Śrīmān Satsvarupa Das Adhikary
5. Śrīmān Karandhar Das Adhikary
6. Śrīmān Hansadutta Das Adhikary
7. Śrīmān Tamala Kṛṣṇa Das Adhikary
8. Śrīmān Sudama Das Adhikary
9. Śrīmān Bali Mardan Das Brahmachary
10. Śrīmān Jagadisa Das Adhikary
11. Śrīmān Hayagriva Das Adhikary
12. Śrīmān Kṛṣṇadas Adhikary

These personalities are now considered as my direct representatives. While I am living they will act as my zonal secretaries and after my demise they will be known as Executors.

Prabhupāda further described the role of the sannyāsīs:

I have already awarded Sannyas or the renounced order of life to some of my students and they have also got very important duties to perform in this connection. The Sannyasis will travel to our different centers for preaching purpose as well as enlightening the members of the center for spiritual advancement.

Prabhupāda's legal document went on to set forth general directions for the G.B.C. secretaries. They should travel regularly to the temples in their respective zones to insure that each devotee chanted sixteen rounds and followed a regulated schedule and that the temples were clean. His twelve G.B.C. secretaries would relieve him of management, and they would rectify present and future difficulties within the society. That rectification, Prabhupāda's document explained, would be possible only when the devotees in each temple engaged fully in regulated devotional service: rising early for maṅgala-ārati at four-thirty, attending Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class and reciting the Sanskrit verses, and chanting in the streets and distributing Back to Godhead magazines and other Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. This emphasis on strictly following Kṛṣṇa conscious principles would

supersede all material formulas for management. The G.B.C. would insure that in their appointed Zones all the devotees were properly engaged. There would be no *māyā*.

The next day Prabhupāda drafted another significant statement, naming Bhagavān, Rūpānuga, and Karandhara trustees of his Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust account will be used to publish my books and literature and to establish Temples throughout the world, specifically three temples are to be established, one each in Māyāpur, Vṛndāvana, and Jagannath Puri.

Since returning to America in 1967, Prabhupāda had often said he would stay permanently in America as the adopted son of his disciples. Now he revealed new plans. He spoke of going to India to preach and to establish large ISKCON temples. For the devotees, who based their activities mostly in small rented houses, Prabhupāda's constructing cathedrallike buildings in India was inconceivable. In India, Prabhupāda said, he would teach his disciples how to preach and how to establish temples.

Prabhupāda picked a team, including two newly initiated sannyāsīs, to accompany him to India. In the future, he said, more disciples could join him, for India would become an important field for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda wrote Satsvarūpa and Uddhava in Boston:

You are all my children, and I love my American boys and girls who are sent to me by my spiritual master and I have accepted them as my disciples. Before coming to your country I took sannyas in 1959. I was publishing B.T.G. since 1944. After taking sannyas I was more engaged in writing my books without any attempt to construct temples or to make disciples like my other God-brothers in India.

I was not very much interested in these matters because my Guru Maharaj liked very much publication of books than constructing big, big temples and creating some neophyte disciples. As soon as He saw that His neophyte disciples were increasing in number, He immediately decided to leave this world. To accept disciples means to take up the responsibility of absorbing the sinful reaction of life of the disciple.

At the present moment in our ISKCON campus politics and diplomacy has entered. Some of my beloved students on whom I counted very, very much have been involved in this matter influenced by Maya. As such there has been some activity which I consider as disrespectful. So I have decided to retire and divert attention to book writing and nothing more.

On July 31 Prabhupāda wrote Brahmānanda and Gargamuni, explaining why he was leaving for India.

In order to set example to my other Sannyasi students I am personally going to Japan with a party of three other Sannyasi students. Although it is beyond my physical condition, still I am going out so that you may learn the responsibility of Sannyas...

I am fervently appealing to you all not to create fracture in the solid body of the Society. Please work conjointly, without any personal ambition. That will help the cause.

It is the injunction of the Vedas that the Spiritual Master should not be treated as ordinary man even sometimes the Spiritual Master behaves like ordinary man. It is the duty of the disciple to accept Him as a Superhuman Man. In the beginning of your letter your comparison of the soldier and the commander is very appropriate. We are on the battlefield of Kurukshetra—one side Maya, the other side Kṛṣṇa. So the regulative principles of a battlefield, namely to abide by the order of the commander, must be followed. Otherwise it is impossible to direct the fighting capacity of the soldiers and thus defeat the opposing elements. Kindly therefore take courage. Let things be rightly done so that our mission may be correctly pushed forward to come out victorious.

Prabhupāda wrote other letters revealing his plans to travel to India.

Our life is very short. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is not meant for fulfilling one's personal ambition, but it is a serious movement for the whole world. I am therefore going to the Eastern hemisphere, beginning from Japan. We are going four in a party and all of us are Sannyasis. In this old age I am going with this party just to set an example to my disciples who have taken recently the Sannyas order.

In preparation for Prabhupāda's trip to India, Prabhupāda's secretary, Devānanda, now Devānanda Swami, asked him questions from the immigration form, mechanically reading the questions and filling in the answers as Prabhupāda replied. "Have you ever committed any criminal acts?" Devānanda asked, reading from the form.

Prabhupāda's eyes widened: "You are asking your spiritual master if he did anything criminal?" And he turned to Bhagavān: "You see, I am simply surrounded by people I cannot trust. It is a dangerous situation."

Prabhupāda sat in his garden the night before his departure. "Don't be disturbed," he told the disciples with him. "We are not going backward. We are going forward. I will reveal everything to you. I will rectify." His strong words and criticisms, he said, had been to enlighten his disciples, to warn them and show them the subtleties of māyā.

Karandhara mentioned that the temple leaders had arranged that only a few devotees go with Prabhupāda the next day to the airport. "Where did this idea come from?" Prabhupāda asked. "Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam instructs that when a saintly person leaves your company, all present should follow the departing vehicle as far as possible, until it is out of sight."

So the next day the devotees all accompanied Prabhupāda, chanting and dancing behind him through the long corridors of Los Angeles International Airport. After many months with them, he was now leaving. Devotees cried.

Prabhupāda, dressed in new garments, his head freshly shaven, looked effulgent. He sat in the departure lounge, head held high, as grave and unfathomable as ever. He was embarking on a new adventure for Lord Caitanya. He was old and might not return, he said, but his disciples should

continue the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement seriously. "If you follow this new schedule," he said, "you will keep māyā from attacking." And then he left them.

* * *

En route to Japan Prabhupāda stopped overnight in Hawaii. He stayed in a motel, and Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī came to talk with him. Govinda dāsī wanted Prabhupāda to stay and install their Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the temple. If Gaurasundara agreed, Prabhupāda said, he would stay a few days longer to perform the Deity installation. "Let me consult," Gaurasundara replied. And the next day Prabhupāda flew on to Japan. From Japan Prabhupāda wrote Govinda dāsī.

It is very encouraging to learn that people inquired about me and were eager to hear my speaking. I could have stayed one or two more days, there was no hurry, but you did not make any arrangement. I personally proposed to Gaurasundara that I shall install the Deities, and he replied that, "Let me consult." But he never informed me of the result of that consultation and with whom he had to consult. So this is the present situation in our ISKCON Society. It is clear that a great mischievous propaganda was lightly made and the effect has created a very unfavorable situation and I am very much afflicted in this connection. Still there is time to save the Society out of this mischievous propaganda and I hope all of you combine together to do the needful.

At the Tokyo airport Prabhupāda was greeted by executives of Dai Nippon Printing Company, the printers of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the twenty thousand monthly copies of Back to Godhead. Prabhupāda and his entourage rode in a limousine, courtesy of Dai Nippon, to a small private apartment about forty-five minutes from the temple.

Prabhupāda had developed a severe cough and several other symptoms of ill health, due, he said, to his disciples' behavior. Yet despite his illness he would talk for hours of his concern for ISKCON, especially with his traveling G.B.C. secretary, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

Soon after their arrival in Japan, Prabhupāda's secretary received a disturbing call from a devotee attending the society-wide Janmāṣṭamī celebration at New Vrindaban. Four of the newly initiated sannyāsīs had arrived, the devotee said, and were teaching a strange philosophy. Devotees were confused. Prabhupāda had left America, the sannyāsīs were saying, because he had rejected his disciples. The sannyāsīs were blaming themselves and other disciples for not realizing that Prabhupāda was actually Kṛṣṇa!

When Prabhupāda heard this, he said, "That is why I did not go. I knew this would happen. This is impersonalism." He defined the Māyāvāda (impersonal) misconception of the guru and Kṛṣṇa. If one says that the guru is God, or if the guru himself says that he is God, that is Māyāvāda philosophy.

For the Māyāvādīs, spiritual realization is realization of one's identity with Brahman, the all-pervading spirit. Despite their austerities and their detachment from materialistic society, and despite their study of Vedānta-sūtra and the commentaries of Śaṅkara, they mistakenly think that Kṛṣṇa's body, name, pastimes, service, and devotees are all facets of māyā, or illusion; therefore they

are called Māyāvādīs. A Māyāvāda spiritual master does not reveal to his disciple the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, the holy pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, or the transcendental form of Kṛṣṇa, since the Māyāvādī considers all these māyā. Instead, the guru explains the oneness of all things, teaching the disciple that the concept of separate existence and ego is illusion. The Māyāvādīs sometimes compare the guru to a ladder. One uses the ladder to reach a higher position, but if the ladder is no longer needed one kicks it away.

Coughing intermittently and speaking with physical discomfort, Prabhupāda explained the Māyāvādīs' dangerous misconceptions. The impersonalists held a cheap, mundane view of the guru, the guru's worship, and the guru's instructions. If one says that the guru is God and God is not a person, then it follows logically that the guru has no eternal personal relationship with his disciples. Ultimately the disciple will become equal to the guru, or in other words he will realize that he, too, is God.

Arguing from the Vedic scripture, Prabhupāda refuted the Māyāvādīs' claims. The individual souls, he said, are Kṛṣṇa's eternal servants, and this master-servant relationship is eternal. Service to Kṛṣṇa, therefore, is spiritual activity. Only by serving the guru, however, can a disciple fully revive his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The Vedic literature gives paramount importance to serving the spiritual master. He is the representative of God, the direct, manifest link to God. No one can approach God but through him. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Those who are directly My devotees are actually not My devotees. But those who are devotees of My servant (the spiritual master) are factually My devotees."

For hours Prabhupāda drilled his disciples. He would pose a Māyāvāda argument, then ask his disciples to defeat it. If they failed, he would defeat it himself. He stressed that the relationship between the spiritual master and disciple was eternal—not because the guru was Kṛṣṇa, but because he was the confidential servant of Kṛṣṇa, eternally. A bona fide spiritual master never says that he is Kṛṣṇa or that Kṛṣṇa is impersonal.

The devotees began to understand how the offenses of minimizing Śrīla Prabhupāda's position were products of Māyāvāda philosophy. For the Māyāvādī, to increase devotion to the guru is unnecessary; if individual relationships are all ultimately illusion, why increase the illusion? If the master-servant relationship is ultimately illusion, then the less the disciple sees his guru as master and himself as servant, the more he is advancing. The Māyāvāda philosophy was a subtle and insidious poison.

At least Prabhupāda had been spared the pain of being personally present in New Vrindaban to witness the Māyāvāda rantings of certain of his disciples and the appalling display of ignorance of most of the others. He had his small entourage and was on his way to preach in India. While here in Tokyo, he would try to obtain many Back to Godhead magazines and Kṛṣṇa books to take with him.

Prabhupāda observed Janmāṣṭamī at his apartment by having disciples read aloud to him from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead throughout the day. If they kept reading, he said, they might be able to finish the book in one day. The devotees had decorated Prabhupāda's room with leaves and flowers strung from the ceiling and along the walls, and Prabhupāda sat on a thin

mattress behind his low desk, hearing the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. At nine P.M., after fasting all day, the devotees were still reading to him when he asked if they would be able to finish the book by midnight. The devotees replied that they would not.

"Then you stop, and I will read." Prabhupāda opened a Sanskrit volume of the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and, for the next two hours, chanted the Sanskrit verses. "You cannot understand the Sanskrit," he said, "but I know you can feel. The verses are so potent that just by hearing one can be purified."

During the reading, Kīrtanānanda Swami and Kārttikeya Swami cooked a feast in the kitchen. At midnight the devotees served Śrīla Prabhupāda the Janmāṣṭamī feast. Taking only a few bites, he watched his disciples eat heartily.

The next day was Vyāsa-pūjā, Prabhupāda's seventy-fourth birthday, and he went to the Tokyo ISKCON temple. The temple was only two rooms—one for living, one for worshipping—with Japanese grass mats on the floor. Prabhupāda sat to the right of the altar, looking at Lord Jagannātha, while his disciples sat on the floor before him, singing Gurv-aṣṭaka prayers glorifying the spiritual master. None of them, however, knew exactly how to conduct the Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony, and after a while they ended the kīrtana. In the painfully awkward moments that followed, the devotees realized they were supposed to do something special. But what?

Prabhupāda appeared angry: "Don't you have puṣpa-yātrā? Isn't prasādam ready?" The devotees looked at one another. "This is not Vyāsa-pūjā," Prabhupāda said. "You have not been to Vyāsa-pūjā before? Don't you know how to celebrate the Vyāsa-pūjā, how to honor the spiritual master?" One of the sannyāsīs began to cry. "Tamāla Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda said, "didn't you see how I observed my Guru Mahārāja's birthday? Where is puṣpa?" (Puṣpa is Sanskrit for "flowers.")

Puṣpa? Puṣpa? Tamāla Kṛṣṇa decided Prabhupāda must mean puṣpānna, a fancy rice dish. "I'm not sure," he said.

"What kind of Vyāsa-pūjā is this with no puṣpa?" Prabhupāda asked.

"We can get some, Prabhupāda," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa offered.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa grabbed Sudāmā. "Prabhupāda wants prasādam. He wants puṣpānna rice." They ran into the kitchen and hurriedly started the rice.

Meanwhile, in the temple the devotees struggled through their version of a Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony. Kīrtanānanda Swami stood and began to read aloud from the introduction of Kṛṣṇa, the Reservoir of Pleasure, which included a short biography of Prabhupāda. But Prabhupāda interrupted, scolding his disciples for concocting and for acting improperly. "If you don't know," he said, "then why didn't you ask me how to do this properly?"

The Japanese guests present didn't understand English, but they could see the spiritual master was disturbed. Prabhupāda explained that in devotional service everything must be done properly,

according to the paramparā method, without concocting. “We will observe Vyāsa-pūjā again tomorrow,” he said. “Come to my room. I will tell you what to do.”

The next day, after a simple, traditional ceremony, the devotees felt ecstatic. Afterward they agreed: when one displeases his spiritual master, there is no happiness; but as soon as the spiritual master is pleased, the disciple becomes blissful.

The Janmāṣṭamī—Vyāsa-pūjā festival in New Vrindaban had become a nightmare. Hundreds of devotees had converged there from the East Coast, with many others from California and even Europe. They had come for a blissful festival but instead had found Śrīla Prabhupāda's newly initiated sannyāsīs expounding a devastating philosophy.

The sannyāsīs, speaking informally to groups here and there, would explain how the devotees had offended Prabhupāda and how he had subsequently withdrawn his mercy. The sannyāsīs revealed their special insights that Prabhupāda was actually God, that none of his disciples had recognized him as such, and that all of them, therefore, beginning with the sannyāsīs, were guilty of minimizing his position. And that was why Prabhupāda had left for India; he had “withdrawn his mercy” from his disciples.

The devotees were devastated. None of them knew what to say in reply. The sannyāsīs, by their preaching, had projected gloom everywhere, which was proper, they said; everyone should feel guilty and realize that they had lost the grace of their spiritual master. No use trying to cheer one another up by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa or eating a feast; everyone should accept the bitter medicine.

Although Prabhupāda had given his disciples three volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, as well as Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, The Nectar of Devotion, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and other literature, none of the devotees were well-versed in them. Many devotees wondered if the philosophy the sannyāsīs were preaching was correct, but none of them knew enough of the scriptures to immediately refute it. The devotees turned to the new G.B.C. men, Prabhupāda's appointed leaders and guardians of ISKCON. The G.B.C., along with other senior devotees, began carefully searching through Prabhupāda's books to ascertain exactly what he had said about the position of the spiritual master.

Then Hayagrīva announced that a letter had just arrived from Śrīla Prabhupāda in Tokyo. As soon as the devotees all gathered under the pavilion roof to hear, Hayagrīva read aloud: “My dear Sons and Daughters...” and then Prabhupāda listed almost all the New Vrindaban residents. The devotees immediately felt a wave of hope. Just to hear Prabhupāda say “My dear Sons and Daughters” was a great relief.

Hayagrīva continued to read: “Please accept my blessings.”

Prabhupāda hadn't rejected them!

The letter went on to say that Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased with the work of the New Vrindaban devotees, and he promised to come and visit them. Soon he would send for other devotees to join him in India, he said. As he described what preaching in India would be like, the devotees became

caught up in the momentum of Śrīla Prabhupāda's preaching spirit. They cheered. They felt blissful.

Then Prabhupāda specifically referred to the difficulty facing ISKCON: "Purge out of New Vrindaban the non-Vrindaban atmosphere that has entered." His letter turned the tide against the Māyāvāda teachings.

The G.B.C. then called a meeting of all disciples in the temple room. Reading selections from *The Nectar of Devotion*, they established that the spiritual master, although not God, should be honored as much as God because he is the confidential servant of God. Several senior devotees spoke their heart's convictions, citing examples from their association with Prabhupāda to prove that he had not rejected them—he was too kind. The sannyāsīs might feel rejected because of their own guilt, someone said, but they should not project their guilt on others.

The false teachings, however, had dealt a blow from which many devotees would need time to recover. Newcomers at the festival were especially unsettled. But the cloud of gloom that had hung over New Vrindaban now lifted, thanks to Śrīla Prabhupāda's timely letter.

The sannyāsīs admitted their confusion. The G.B.C. then phoned Kīrtanānanda Swami in Tokyo and told him that Prabhupāda's letter had resolved most of the problems, but that the sannyāsīs still held their misconceptions. Hearing this, Prabhupāda felt his suspicions confirmed.

Certain disciples had been contaminated by the poisonous philosophy from India. Consequently, material desires for power and control had overwhelmed them, even in Prabhupāda's presence.

Turning to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Sudāmā, and the three sannyāsīs with him, Prabhupāda asked what they thought should be done. With the previous day's philosophic drilling still sharp in their minds, they suggested that anyone teaching Māyāvāda philosophy should not be allowed to stay within ISKCON. Prabhupāda agreed. If these sannyāsīs continued to preach Māyāvāda philosophy, he said, they should not be allowed to stay in his temples but should go out and "preach" on their own. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa conveyed this message to the G.B.C. in the U.S., and Prabhupāda was satisfied that the problem would be adjusted. He had created his G.B.C. to handle such matters.

On September 2 Prabhupāda wrote Hamsadūta in Germany.

Regarding the poisonous effect in our Society, it is a fact and I know where from this poison tree has sprung up and how it affected practically the whole Society in a very dangerous form. But it does not matter. Prahlād Maharaj was administered poison, but it did not act. Similarly Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas were administered poison and it did not act. I think in the same parampara system that the poison administered to our Society will not act if some of our students are as good as Prahlād Maharaj. I have therefore given the administrative power to the Governing Body Commission.

To Hayagrīva in New Vrindaban Prabhupāda wrote,

I am very glad to know that the G.B.C. is actively working to rectify the subversive situation which has been weakening the very foundation of our Society. All you members of the G.B.C. please always remain very vigilant in this connection so that our Society's growth may go on unimpeded by such poisonous elements. Your preaching in New Vrindaban as well as in tensified study of our literatures with seriousness is very much encouraging. Please continue this program with vigour and reestablish the solidity of our movement.

From the beginning I was strongly against the impersonalists, and all my books stressed on this point. So my oral instruction as well as my books are all at your service. Now you G.B.C. consult them and get a clear and strong idea. Then there will be no more disturbance. The four Sannyasis may bark, but still the caravan will pass.

Prabhupāda wrote Satsvarūpa in Boston,

I am very glad to know that you are not affected by the propaganda of the Sannyasis that I am displeased with all the members of the Society—I am never displeased with any member.

The worst was over, Prabhupāda thought. For months this problem had upset him and his writing. Relentlessly he had instructed his disciples, for their own benefit and for the benefit of his movement. The disease had taken its toll, and that was unfortunate. But the devotees were being forced to turn to Prabhupāda's books and apply their teachings, and that was the positive outcome. Now they should clearly understand the position of the spiritual master and never again be led astray by false philosophies or sentiment.

Prabhupāda's main business in Tokyo was with Dai Nippon. Considering him an important author and a venerable religious monk, they had provided him a car and apartment. Each morning they sent a private car to drive Prabhupāda to Imperial Palace Park, where he could take his morning walk. Prabhupāda liked the neatly planted trees and gravel walks, and he appreciated the habits of the Japanese people. As he would pass, elderly ladies would bow to him from the waist, and others would fold their hands respectfully, acknowledging his being a holy man.

On the morning of Prabhupāda's meeting with Dai Nippon, he came out of his apartment with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Devānanda Mahārāja and got into the back seat of a Dai Nippon company car. The car proceeded through the early-morning streets, and Prabhupāda chanted his Gāyatrī mantra silently.

A Dai Nippon junior executive escorted Prabhupāda and his two disciples into an elevator and up to a spacious room with a long conference table. Prabhupāda's guide cordially offered him a seat at the table, and Prabhupāda sat down, with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Devānanda Mahārāja on either side. Soon there entered Dai Nippon's six top executives, including the corporation president. Each stood behind his respective chair, and each in turn, beginning with the president, bowed slightly from the waist and presented his calling card. Addressing Prabhupāda as "Your Divine Grace," they introduced themselves, announced their posts, and took their seats.

"We are very honored to have you here," the president began. "You are a great religious author, and it is our great privilege to be publishing your books." After the president had spoken briefly, tea

was served. Prabhupāda requested hot milk. Conversation was informal, and Prabhupāda spoke of the importance of his mission and his Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. No one discussed business, however, and the Dai Nippon executives soon excused themselves. They would meet again the next morning.

When Prabhupāda was again alone in the room with his disciples and the junior executive who had escorted him, he asked the young Japanese, "So what is your goal in life?" By way of answer, the man gathered up all the business cards that lay scattered before Prabhupāda on the table and stacked them, with the president's on top, then the first vice-president's, and so on, putting his own card in its place on the bottom. He then dramatically removed his card from the bottom of the stack and slapped it on top—a graphic answer to Prabhupāda's question.

Prabhupāda smiled. To become president of the company, he said, was temporary. All material life was temporary. He explained on the basis of Bhagavad-gītā that the body was temporary and that the self was eternal. All the identities and positions people hankered after were based on the bodily conception of life and would one day be frustrated. The purpose of life, therefore, was not to become the temporary president of a temporary corporation within the temporary material world, but to realize the eternal soul's relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead and gain eternal life. Prabhupāda spoke for almost half an hour while the man listened politely.

At the next day's meeting, negotiations began. The conference room was different, the table smaller, and three of Dai Nippon's international sales representatives sat opposite Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda presented his price: \$1.35 per book.

"Oh, Your Divine Grace," one of the salesmen exclaimed, "it is not possible for us to give this price. We will lose too heavily. We cannot afford it." They explained their position, quoting paper costs and other expenses.

Prabhupāda began to speak about his mission. ISKCON's book distribution, he said, was a charitable work for the benefit of all humanity. ISKCON distributed these books for whatever donations people were able to make, and he received no profit or royalties. It was spiritual education, the most valuable literature. "In any case," Prabhupāda said in closing, "you deal with my secretary in this regard." And he sat back in his chair. The burden was on Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa began by saying that Prabhupāda had been too kind, because ISKCON could actually never pay such a high price. He then quoted a price forty cents lower per book than Prabhupāda's quote. "Mr. Tamāla,"—the salesmen were again upset—"please reconsider your point." A polite argument ensued.

Suddenly Prabhupāda interrupted, presenting himself as an impartial third party. He said he would settle the difference that had arisen between his secretary and the salesmen. "I have heard both sides," he said, "and I feel that the price should be \$1.25 per book. That's all."

"Yes, Your Divine Grace," the salesmen agreed, "that is right."

After further negotiations, Prabhupāda agreed on a contract that included a reprint of Volume One and a first printing of Volume Two of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, two issues of Back to Godhead, a Hindi issue of Back to Godhead, and a new book, Śrī Īsopaniṣad. ISKCON had to pay only \$5,000 cash, and Dai Nippon would deliver everything on credit.

Prabhupāda held a feast at his apartment for the Dai Nippon executives, who especially liked the samosās and pakorās. They presented Prabhupāda with a watch and continued to see to his comfort during his stay in Tokyo. Prabhupāda also met a Canadian-born Japanese boy, Bruce, who was seriously interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda invited him to come and join him in India, and the boy eagerly agreed.

SPL 32: India: Dancing White Elephants

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

India:

Dancing White Elephants

= Calcutta

August 29, 1970

For the first time in almost three years, Prabhupāda returned to India—to Calcutta, his hometown. Although it was late and the journey from Tokyo had been twelve hours, Prabhupāda felt happy as he descended the stairway from the airplane. Acyutānanda and Jayapatāka, his only American disciples in India, were standing on the airfield, and as they saw him approaching in his saffron silk robes, they bowed down. Prabhupāda smiled and embraced them. They ushered him to a flower-bedecked car and accompanied him to the terminal building, where he entered the V.I.P. lounge.

Some of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers and old Calcutta friends were present to receive him, and a kīrtana party from the Chaitanya Math was chanting. The reception was large and festive. As the room resounded with Hare Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda took his seat. The sound of the kīrtana, the many pictures of Kṛṣṇa, and the smell of incense and jasmine flowers combined with Prabhupāda's transcendental presence to transform the drab airport into a heavenly scene.

Indians crowded forward to place flower garlands around Prabhupāda's neck, and as the garlands piled higher, Prabhupāda removed them. But the garlands kept coming, and again they piled up, almost covering Prabhupāda's face. The American devotees watched in fascination as the Bengali brahmācārīs played their mṛdaṅgas with exotic rhythms. The people in the crowd pressed in closer to touch Prabhupāda's feet and ask his blessings, and Prabhupāda smiled, seeming quite at home. When the kīrtana ended, he began to speak.

“I am coming back to the city after three years. Hare Kṛṣṇa. I have been around the world and have found that happiness and peace cannot be established in this world by materialistic advancement. I have seen Japan, which is highly advanced in machines and technology. Yet there is no real

happiness there. But the people of India, even if they do not understand the significance of saṅkīrtana, they enjoy listening to it. My advice to the Indians is that if you advance only in science and technology, without paying attention to hari-nāma, then you will remain forever backward. There is tremendous strength in hari-nāma..."

Reporter: "You have said, and I quote, 'Even communism, if it is without kṛṣṇa-nāma, is void.' Why do you say that?"

Prabhupāda: "Why do you refer to communism in particular? Without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, everything is void. Whatever you do, Kṛṣṇa must remain in the center. Whether you are communist or capitalist or anything else—it doesn't matter. We want to see whether your activities are centered around Kṛṣṇa."

Reporter: "Right now there is too much turmoil in Bengal. What is your advice to us at this time?"

Prabhupāda: "My advice is to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is the piece of advice to both the capitalists and the communists. All animosity between them will cease completely, and all their problems will be solved, if they take this advice."

The crowd, affirming Prabhupāda's words, began to shout, "Sādhu! Sādhu!"

Prabhupāda sat in the back seat, on his way from the airport to the home of Mr. Das Gupta on Hindustan Road. Outside the car window the familiar scenes of Calcutta passed by. For the newcomers riding with him, however, Calcutta was foreign and unfamiliar. Gaunt, loitering cows and street dogs, small horses pulling huge loads, barefoot ricksha-wālās, open shops with exotic foods, dense crowds of pedestrians, the sultry heat, and the incredible traffic—these, although familiar to Prabhupāda, plunged the disciples who had flown with him into culture shock. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa looked nervously at the driver, who swerved in and out of traffic, honking his horn. Prabhupāda laughed softly. "Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, how do you like this driving?"

Acyutānanda and Jayapatāka, however, were acclimatized to Calcutta and had learned to appreciate its culture. They had met high-class, cultured Bengalis who accepted them as sādhus despite their American birth. They had preached in many homes and had attracted curious crowds by chanting in public. They had not, however, achieved a solid foothold for ISKCON. But now Prabhupāda had come to change that. He would preach wonderfully, just as he had done in America, and his disciples were eager to serve as his instruments. He would be their vital force, their inspiration, for he was empowered by Lord Caitanya.

Prabhupāda reached the home of Mr. Das Gupta at almost midnight. Many people wanted to see him, and when Devānanda Mahārāja tried to turn them away Prabhupāda said, "No, no, let them come in." Prabhupāda's sister, Bhavatarini, arrived with an array of special dishes she had cooked.

"We can't eat now," one of the sannyāsīs protested. "It's late at night."

"No," Prabhupāda said, "we must eat everything. Whatever my sister cooks, we have to eat. This is her favorite activity. She likes to cook for me and feed me. Everyone must take prasādam." The

devotees at the Chaitanya Math had also cooked a feast, and as Prabhupāda was honoring the prasādam prepared by his sister the prasādam from the Chaitanya Math arrived. He took a little and induced his followers to eat sumptuously.

It was 1:00 A.M. Prabhupāda sat in his room with Acyutānanda, Jayapatāka, and Devānanda Mahārāja. He explained how irresponsible letters from his disciples in India had perpetrated within ISKCON a deep misunderstanding of the spiritual master's position. He quoted the verse sāṅgād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ and explained it: "The guru is on an equal level with Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is not God, but he is the dearmost servant of God."

Prabhupāda continued preaching to his disciples, clearing away any misconceptions about the spiritual master's position. All the past unpleasant events, he said, were now being rectified. The devotees should continue working together with new life and vigor.

Acyutānanda asked Prabhupāda if he could take sannyāsa. The Indians, he said, would respect a sannyāsī more. Prabhupāda agreed that sannyāsa would help Acyutānanda's preaching, and he said that Jayapatāka should also take sannyāsa. The ceremony would be in a week, on Rādhāṣṭamī.

The Amrita Bazar Patrika carried a front-page news story of Prabhupāda's arrival. A photo showed Prabhupāda walking, with his hand in his bead bag, surrounded by young sannyāsīs carrying daṇḍas.

Many VIP's have come to Dumdum Airport before but never have we seen gaiety and celebrations of this magnitude... It was difficult to imagine that he was 75 years old because he was completely fresh after this long journey. With a little smile on his face, he blessed one and all with the word, "Hari Bol!"

Prabhupāda wrote to the devotees in Japan,

In India, from the very moment we stepped down from the airplane, there is good propaganda work going on... The boy Bruce is improving and becoming more interested. He has now sacrificed his hairs for Kṛṣṇa—that is a good sign.

Calcutta was in political turmoil. A group of Communist terrorists, the Naxalites, had been rioting, murdering prominent businessmen and threatening the lives of many others. Many wealthy Marwari industrialists were leaving the city for Delhi and Bombay. Aside from the terrorists, Bengali college students were growing unruly. But the older people of West Bengal, comprising most of Prabhupāda's visitors, were alarmed by the violence and unrest. The only shelter, Prabhupāda told them, was Kṛṣṇa.

People are in very much perturbed condition. All of them are expecting me to do something for ameliorating the situation, but I am simply advising them to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa because this transcendental sound is the only panacea for all material diseases.

Prabhupāda saw no need to fabricate a special program for the social problems of Calcutta. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa was "the only panacea for all material diseases." The question was how best to

use his American disciples to give this panacea to the Indians. Prabhupāda had his party of ten devotees, and he had asked his leaders in the West for twenty more within the month. He had ordered \$60,000 worth of books and magazines from Dai Nippon, and his sannyāsīs were going daily into the streets to perform kīrtana.

The saṅkīrtana party was getting a good response. Shaven-headed Westerners, wearing śikhās, Vaiṣṇava tilaka, and saffron robes, playing karatālas and mṛdaṅgas, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with heart and soul, quoting Sanskrit verses from Bhagavad-gītā, affirming Lord Kṛṣṇa to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead—for the Bengalis this was sensational, and hundreds would gather to watch. Prabhupāda knew the great appeal his disciples would have; everyone would want to see them. He therefore affectionately called them his “dancing white elephants.”

These same devotees, who had grown to love chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in the streets of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, were now going into an exhausting heat never encountered in America and chanting on Dalhousie Square for several hours daily. Crowds would press in closely, sometimes teasing, laughing, or scoffing, but more often looking on with deep amazement.

Prabhupāda's idea was that when Indians saw young Western people adopting the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness the faith of the Indians in their own culture would increase. Prabhupāda explained to his disciples how formerly, during the time of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, India had been a Kṛṣṇa conscious state. For the last thousand years, however, India had been under foreign subjugation, first under the Moguls and then under the British. As a result, the intelligentsia and, to a lesser degree, the masses of India had lost respect for their own culture. They were now pursuing the materialistic goals of the West, and they saw this as more productive and more practical than religion, which was only sentimental.

Westerners living as renounced Vaiṣṇavas could, as Prabhupāda was well aware, turn the heads and hearts of the Indians and help them regain faith in their own lost culture. It was not a material tactic, however, but a spiritual strength. Prabhupāda stressed that the devotees must be pure in their actions; this purity would be their force.

The chanting in Dalhousie Square and along Chowringee had gone on for about ten days when Prabhupāda decided to stop it. The street kīrtana, although an excellent method of preaching, was not the most effective method for India, he said. There were many professional kīrtana groups in Bengal, and Prabhupāda didn't want his disciples to be seen like that—as professional performers or beggars. He wanted them to preach in a way that would bring them closer to the more intelligent, respectable Indians, and he unfolded his new plan.

He called it “Life Membership.” His disciples would invite Indians interested in supporting and associating with ISKCON to become members. A membership fee of 1,111 rupees would entitle the member to many benefits, such as copies of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and free accommodation in ISKCON centers around the world.

Speaking one evening in a private home before a group of wealthy businessmen, Prabhupāda initiated his life membership program. After lecturing, he invited his audience to become ISKCON life members, and several Calcutta merchants immediately signed.

B. L. Jaju: I was really overwhelmed by the simplicity of Prabhupāda's nature. He told me how he had been carrying on his regular business when his guru had told him that four hundred years back Caitanya Mahāprabhu had said that Hare Rāma, Hare Kṛṣṇa would be chanted all throughout the world. He said that that was the job given to him by his spiritual master and that he would have to go to America and do it.

I found no snobbery in him. He was very simple. And he was telling, as if my brother was telling to me, simply how he went to U.S.A., how he started, and how gradually he planned to have this Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world.

Seeing his disciples who had changed their lives, I began to think, "Why not I? In my humble way, I should do something, without worrying what other people are doing." I found that imperceptibly he was affecting my life. My wife and even my son were really surprised when they found that these white people, whom we thought could never turn to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, had changed so much. So we thought we also must try to follow better the teaching of the Gītā.

Whether at a life member's home, at a formal lecture before a large audience, or in his own room, Prabhupāda continued speaking from Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam about Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Of this he never tired. A guest would ask a question, and Prabhupāda would begin his answer by having one of his disciples read a relevant verse from the Gītā. Then he would explain it. If the guest was unsubmissive and wanted to challenge, Prabhupāda would argue.

Sitting at his low desk, occasionally drinking water from his loṭā, Prabhupāda would talk hour after hour. The temperature rose to 100 degrees, and as Prabhupāda sat in his room preaching, he wore no shirt, only a simple top cloth, which left his arms, shoulders, and part of his chest bare. Sometimes the devotees sitting with him would be sick or sleepy or otherwise inattentive, and sometimes they would excuse themselves, returning hours later to find him still preaching. Guests also came and went. Yet except for a nap after lunch, Prabhupāda kept preaching, often throughout the day and into the night. Never bored with his subject matter, he would speak as long as there was an interested hearer.

His audiences varied. Sometimes he would speak to a room of husbands and wives, all cultured and well dressed, and sometimes he would speak to one lone old man. Sometimes his audience listened quietly, or argued, or even when appreciating showed their misunderstanding. Sometimes a guest would ask him why he criticized Bengal's reputed saints and politicians, and he would explain on the basis of Bhagavad-gītā that the real sādhu always glorifies Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda often related his preaching to events of particular interest to his audience, such as Calcutta's political unrest or the downfall of Vedic culture. Yet his concern for local affairs was only the practical necessity of the moment, for he was beyond India. He was thinking of people, places, and activities all around the world. In answering his letters, he would deeply ponder matters in

England, Australia, Hawaii, or New Vrindaban. And beyond this, he would always be thinking of Kṛṣṇa. He wanted to glorify Kṛṣṇa throughout the world; India happened to be his present field.

The devotees in India had the privilege of closely observing Prabhupāda in his preaching. His superior tolerance and kindness both inspired them and, by contrast, exposed to them their own inadequacies. As newcomers to India, the devotees were still greatly involved with the practical affairs of living in Calcutta. Weather, disease, and culture shock distracted their minds from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But Prabhupāda's presence, his preaching, and his example reminded them that reality was beyond the body.

Sometimes the devotees criticized certain of Prabhupāda's visitors. They met Indians who sat with Prabhupāda and presented a facade of godliness but who later smoked cigarettes and showed other signs of low character. Once a group of devotees complained to Prabhupāda about these hypocritical Indians, but Prabhupāda told them the story of the bee and the fly. The bee, he explained, always looks for honey, and the fly for a nasty sore or infection. The devotee should be like the honeybee and see the good in others, not like the fly, looking for the faults.

Prabhupāda's disciples discovered that the best way to learn to live in India was to follow exactly what Prabhupāda did. When taking prasādam with him at someone's home, they would eat the same foods as he, and in the same order. When he would finish, they would finish; and when he would wash his hands, they would wash. Life in India was strange, even bewildering, and Prabhupāda's disciples did not have Prabhupāda's vision of his mission in India. But they were following him, like little ducks, wherever he went.

As the devotees came closer to Prabhupāda and witnessed more of his unique qualities, they came to love him more than ever. Sitting in his room on a white cushion and leaning back on the white bolster, Prabhupāda appeared golden-hued and regal, despite his simple surroundings. The devotees could see that he was unaffected by his surroundings, whether in Los Angeles, where he had lived comfortably amid opulence, or in Calcutta. He was at home in India, but he was not just another Indian, not even just another Indian sādhu. He was unique. And he was theirs.

* * *

From Prabhupāda's first day in Calcutta he had thought of going to Māyāpur, the sacred birthplace of Lord Caitanya. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, father of Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master and pioneer in spreading Lord Caitanya's teachings beyond India, had longed for the day when Americans and Europeans would join with their Bengali brothers in Māyāpur, chanting the holy names. Prabhupāda wanted to purchase land, establish a Māyāpur center for his Western disciples, and fulfill the dream of his spiritual predecessors. He had written to one of his Godbrothers,

I wish to go to Māyāpur to pay my respects to our Beloved Spiritual Master His Divine Grace Sri Śrīla Prabhupāda as well as to complete the purchase of the land. So if Jagmohan Prabhu will accompany us to finish this transaction it will be very kind of him and I hope you will kindly request him to accompany us.

The followers of Lord Caitanya accept Māyāpur, one hundred and ten miles north of Calcutta, to be identical with Vṛndāvana. Five thousand years ago Lord Kṛṣṇa lived in Vṛndāvana, performing His childhood pastimes, and five hundred years ago Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared in Māyāpur as Lord Caitanya. For the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, therefore, Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana are the two most dear and sacred places on earth. What better place for ISKCON to have its world headquarters than in Māyāpur! But despite various attempts over the past several years, Śrīla Prabhupāda had still not acquired property there.

He had gone to Māyāpur with Acyutānanda in 1967, seen a plot of land, and asked Acyutānanda to try and get it. But Acyutānanda and the Muhammadan owner had never reached an agreement. Some of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers had temples and property in Māyāpur, but they wouldn't help. Some even seemed to be working against him. When Prabhupāda had written one of his Godbrothers in Māyāpur asking him to help Acyutānanda secure land, the Godmother's secretary had replied that he was unable to do so. The secretary had remarked, "One must be very fortunate to get land in Māyāpur."

Prabhupāda criticized his Godbrothers' uncooperative spirit. He was becoming impatient. "Why are we not able to get the land in Māyāpur?" he asked his disciples. "This is dragging on for three hundred years!" Again he wrote one of his Godbrothers.

Regarding propagating the Name of Śrī Māyāpur as Birthplace of Lord Caitanya, it is going on regularly in our different literatures and books. If you kindly take the trouble of coming here conveniently, I can show you how we are giving publicity to the Birthsite of Lord Caitanya. Perhaps you know that I begged from His Holiness Sripad Tirtha Maharaj a little piece of land at Mayapur for constructing a home for my Western disciples, but he refused the proposal. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thakur wanted that the American and European devotees would come to Mayapur, and the prophecy is now fulfilled. Unfortunately they are loitering in the streets of Calcutta without having a suitable place at Mayapur. Do you think it is all right?

Accompanied by a small party of men, Prabhupāda took the train to Navadvīpa, just across the Ganges from Māyāpur. There they were met by members of the Devānanda Math. Riding in rickshas to the Devānanda Math, the devotees were charmed by the rural atmosphere of Navadvīpa. Everything was lush from the rainy season, and the devotees found their romantic expectations of India now being fulfilled as they proceeded along roads lined with tropical vegetation. At the Devānanda Math Prabhupāda and his disciples were given special prasādam and good accommodations.

Then the rains returned. Day after day the rains came, and the Ganges rose higher and higher, until crossing the swift river into Māyāpur became impossible. Since the rains were not likely to abate soon, Prabhupāda decided to leave. He and his disciples boarded an early-morning train to Calcutta.

The tracks were flooded. Repeatedly the train had to stop—once for more than eight hours. The heat and the crowds of passengers constantly passing through the car made the wait torturous for the devotees. Prabhupāda asked one of his disciples to take a ricksha and try to arrange better transportation. Nothing was available. At last the train continued toward Calcutta, only to stop at

the next station, where all the passengers changed to another train. Finally Prabhupāda reached Calcutta and Mr. Das Gupta's home.

"Maybe Lord Caitanya does not want us to establish our headquarters in Māyāpur," Prabhupāda said. The two purposes in his mind—establishing a place in Calcutta and purchasing land in Māyāpur—he had not accomplished.

Prabhupāda continued holding programs in people's homes and talking with guests in his room. One day a Mr. Dandharia visited Prabhupāda and mentioned Bombay's upcoming Sadhu Samaj, a gathering of the most important sādhus in India. It was to be held at Chowpatti Beach and promised to be a big affair. Mr. Dandharia requested Prabhupāda to attend, and Prabhupāda accepted.

* * *

Bombay

October 1970

Responding to Śrīla Prabhupāda's request for more disciples to join him in India, a group of twenty American devotees traveled to Brussels and took an inexpensive flight aboard a propeller-driven craft to Bombay. At the airport, while the devotees were wondering where they should go, Mr. Kailash Seksaria, a wealthy Bombay businessman and nephew of Mr. Dandharia, approached them with a letter from Prabhupāda. Mr. Seksaria had arranged for several cars, and he escorted the devotees to his home in an affluent Bombay residential area on Marine Drive. He fed them and provided them with living quarters.

Two days later a telegram arrived informing the devotees and their host that Prabhupāda would be arriving the next day. Prabhupāda arrived at the Bombay airport and, after an enthusiastic reception, rode with Mr. Seksaria to his home.

Marine Drive runs along the seashore, and the houses lining it belong to the very rich. Mr. Seksaria's residence was seven stories, and he offered Śrīla Prabhupāda the first floor, with its large rooms overlooking the Arabian Sea.

Bombay, Prabhupāda said, was India's most materialistic city. It was the nation's movie capital and the city where, more than in any other Indian city, the people wore Western dress. The "gateway to India," it boasted the most industries, the most businesses, and the most billboards. It was a cosmopolitan melting pot of cultures and religions but had none of the Naxalite terrorism of Calcutta or the heavy political atmosphere of New Delhi. Nor did it have the aristocratic families who worshiped Lord Caitanya and His saṅkīrtana movement. But it had its own advantages for preaching, Prabhupāda said. It was a city of wealth, with many pious citizens who were intelligent and quick to adopt a good idea. He predicted Bombay would be a favorable city for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda's first Bombay preaching engagement was at a gathering of sādhus, a paṇḍāl in an open field just a few blocks from Mr. Seksaria's home. Prabhupāda's disciples had also been invited, and they arrived several hours before Prabhupāda. The array of Indian sādhus, sitting onstage in long rows, startled the devotees. Some of the sādhus were bearded, some shaven-headed, some with long matted hair and holding tridents, some covered with ashes, some adorned with beads and clay markings. The devotees were amazed, and many of the sādhus, on seeing the white-skinned Vaiṣṇavas, were also amazed.

When the devotees came onstage and began their kīrtana, the audience responded by clapping in rhythm and chanting. Afterward, on the advice of Mr. Seksaria, the devotees took their kīrtana out into the streets, and many in the audience followed.

That evening the devotees returned to the paṇḍāl with Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda sat on a raised platform, and his disciples sat at his feet. After having three of his disciples speak in English, Prabhupāda spoke in Hindi, while the audience of more than five hundred listened silently. After his lecture he came down from the platform, and a crowd gathered around him, touching his feet and following him to his car.

When Prabhupāda heard from his disciples of their spontaneous kīrtana through the streets of Bombay, he said they should go to the busiest bazaars and chant daily. So they did. Wherever large numbers of people gathered, the devotees would go and chant. They were strong, youthful, exuberant, and faithful, and they would chant in the streets for three or four hours each day.

Although Prabhupāda did not physically go into the streets chanting with his disciples, he was with them by his instructions and by his presence before they went out in the morning and when they returned in the evening. They were chanting because he had told them to. And they knew that chanting was the natural activity of the soul; everyone should chant. The devotees knew that at the end of life they would go back home, back to Godhead. And better than that, at the end of the day they would go back to Marine Drive to Prabhupāda, who would smile and encourage them.

Radio stations and newspapers took note of the Western devotees chanting in the city. One article appeared in the October 10 edition of the Times of India:

A group of Americans, including women with babes in arms, belonging to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) has been moving around Bombay during the past few days chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, or Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare, to the accompaniment of cymbals, castanets, and drums (mridangams).

... Can the materialistic West, or at any rate, a microscopic part of it, have turned at last to embrace the spiritualism of the east? I met several of the Kirtan-chanting Americans (who have come here to attend the seventh All-India Conference at the Bharat Sadhu Samaj which begins here today) and was at once struck by their sincerity and utter surrender to the cult they have adopted. The Vaishnavas of Mathura could not be so guileless I thought, as this band of Bhakti enthusiasts.

The sand of Chowpatti Beach was fine and clean. The audience numbered in the thousands. Sādhus sat onstage, Prabhupāda and his followers among them. It was twilight. The sky above the Arabian Sea was cloudy, and a pleasant breeze was stirring.

There had already been two lectures expounding the Māyāvāda philosophy, and now it was time for Prabhupāda to speak—the last scheduled speaker of the evening. The audience was eager to hear him; his accomplishments in the West had caused great curiosity, especially now that he had arrived in Bombay and his devotees were chanting daily in public. Prabhupāda's disciples, bored and exasperated by the preceding two hours of Hindi oratory, could scarcely wait any longer for Prabhupāda to speak. But Prabhupāda, instead of addressing the audience, turned to his disciples and said, "Begin chanting."

As soon as the devotees began the kīrtana, little Sarasvatī stood and began to dance. Following her, the other devotees rose and began to dance. As the kīrtana came alive with mṛdaṅgas and karatālas, the dancing and chanting of the devotees seemed to disturb some of the sādhus onstage, who rose one by one and left. The audience, however, responded enthusiastically, many of them standing and clapping. After five minutes of ecstatic kīrtana, the devotees spontaneously jumped down onto the sand and headed toward the audience. Thousands in the crowd rose to their feet and began to move along with the devotees in a dance, backward and forward.

Indians began crying in uncontrolled happiness, overwhelmed by the genuine kṛṣṇa-bhakti of these foreigners. Never before had such a thing happened. Policemen and press reporters joined in the chanting and dancing. Chowpatti Beach was in an uproar of Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana, as Prabhupāda and his disciples showed the potency of Lord Caitanya's sankīrtana movement.

After about ten minutes the kīrtana ended, though a tumultuous unrest pervaded the talkative crowd. Fifteen minutes elapsed before all the people returned to their seats and the program could continue. The devotees had left the stage and taken their seats on the ground level, leaving Prabhupāda alone onstage. Prabhupāda's voice echoed over the public-address system.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I was requested to speak in Hindi, but I am not very much accustomed to speak in Hindi. Therefore, the authorities in this meeting have allowed me to speak in English. I hope you will follow me, because it is Bombay and most people will be speaking English. The problem is, as this evening's speaker, His Holiness Swami Akhaṇḍānandajī spoke to you, how we can make everyone accustomed to take up good habits—sad-ācāra? I think in this age, Kali-yuga, there are many faults." Prabhupāda went on to explain the power of Lord Caitanya's movement to clean the hearts of everyone. He referred to the two great rogues whom Lord Caitanya had delivered, Jagāi and Mādhāi.

"Now we are saving, wholesale, Jagāis and Mādhāis. Therefore, if we want peace, if we want to be situated on the sad-ācāra platform, then we must spread the hari-nāma mahā-mantra all over the world. And it has been practically proven. The American and European Vaiṣṇavas who have come here, who have chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra—they were cowflesh eaters, they were drunkards, they were illicit sex mongers, they were all kinds of gamblers. But having taken to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, they have given up everything abominable. Sad-ācāra has come automatically. They are no more meat-eaters, they are no more gamblers, they are no more illicit

sex mongers, they are no more intoxicators. They do not even take tea, they do not even take coffee, they do not even smoke, which I think is very rare to be found in India. But they have given up. Why? Because they have taken to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Prabhupāda ended his talk after about five minutes.

"I do not feel that I have to say very much. You can see what is the result of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is not something artificial. It is there in everyone. I have not done anything magical. But this Kṛṣṇa consciousness is present in all of us. We simply have to revive it."

The audience responded with cheers and a great round of applause. Prabhupāda, with greater force and eloquence than the long-winded Māyāvādīs, had shown the essence of spiritual life—ecstatic chanting of the holy names. And he had offered the living testimony of his American disciples.

For the next week, Prabhupāda and his disciples were the talk of Bombay, and they began receiving many invitations to speak and perform kīrtana throughout the city. The Times Weekly's coverage of the Sadhu Samaj spotlighted the memorable presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples.

A group of twenty Americans, members of the Hare Krishna delegation, took over the dais. The air was filled with the beating of mridangas, the clash of cymbals and the music of the maha-mantra. Swaying from side to side, their tufts of hair tossing in the breeze they chanted: Hare Krishna...

One greying reporter whom I had always regarded as a particularly unsentimental person said to me in an emotion-choked voice: "Do you realize what is happening? Very soon Hinduism is going to sweep the West. The Hare Krishna movement will compensate for all our loss at the hands of padres through the centuries."

About twenty-five newsmen came to a press conference on the fifth floor of Mr. Seksaria's residence. Prabhupāda sat with his disciples on a large mattress and answered questions, and the devotees showed a film of the San Francisco Ratha-yātrā. The reporters asked about New Vrindaban. They questioned the devotees: Why had they become sādhus? Why had they left their country?

The next day the press was full of stories of Prabhupāda and his movement. The Times of India picked up on a particular angle: "U.S. MILLIONAIRE'S SON SEEKS SOLACE IN KRISHNA SOCIETY." The article told of Girirāja's renouncing his father's wealth to join Prabhupāda's movement. One newspaper quoted Girirāja: "My father works hard and earns fabulous money. He also fights with my mother. My sisters ran away from the house. Thus, in spite of material comforts, nobody is happy." Quoting Śyāmasundara: "My father is very rich, but he has to take sleeping tablets every night." And there were other articles.

Soon letters appeared in the letters column of the Times of India.

As far as my knowledge goes, these foreign Hindus of the Hare Krishna movement cannot be equal to the native original brahmanas and Hindus. They will have to be relegated to the lower castes. It is significant to see one of the newly converted sadhus, Sri Gopal dasa, formerly Charles Poland of

Chicago, stated that he was a construction worker formerly. Doing sudra's work, it would thus become necessary to allot the three lower castes to these foreign converts according to their profession.

Another letter stated, "The Hare Krishna movement is just a sporadic fad of sentimentalists."

Prabhupāda said these letters should be answered, and he personally outlined replies, delegating their writing to specific disciples. Within a few days, Prabhupāda's replies appeared in the press.

In India even amongst the brahmanas in different provinces there is no social intercourse. So if they are socially accepted or not doesn't matter. For example, amongst the qualified legal practitioners in different provinces there may not be social intercourse, but that does not mean they are not qualified lawyers. This is a cultural movement, and if the whole world accepts this cult, even though Indian brahmanas do not accept it will do no harm at all... We are not striving for social or political unity, but if Krishna consciousness is accepted there will automatically be political, social and religious unity...

The fact that one of our boys was a construction worker does not mean that he belongs to the sudra community. The sudra community is the less intelligent class or illiterate class who have no information of the value of life. In America even the highest cultured and educated person can go to work as an ordinary construction worker because they accept the dignity of labor. So although a boy was working as a construction worker in America, he is not a sudra.

But even if he is accepted as a sudra, Lord Krishna says that anyone who comes to Him is eligible to be elevated to the highest position of going back to home, back to Godhead.

In a letter signed by Girirāja, Prabhupāda refuted the charge that his movement was a "sporadic fad of sentimentalists."

... How can our movement be sporadic when this science was taught in the Gītā five thousand years ago and instructed to the sun-god millions of years before that? How can it be called sporadic when our activity is sanatana-dharma, the eternal occupation of the living entity? Would faddists give up all meat-eating, intoxicants, illicit sex, and gambling for over five years now? Would faddists give up friends, family, and money and get up at 4:00 A.M. daily, ready to go to any country in the world and preach in any conditions immediately on the request of their spiritual master?

Prabhupāda saw all news coverage of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as an aid to propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even by criticizing the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, he said, the papers were broadcasting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa's name was absolute.

Mr. Seksaria held a special program for many important dignitaries of Bombay. Although he had expected no more than two hundred persons, many more came. They were Bombay's elite—the women dressed in expensive silk sārīs and wearing gold and jewels, the men in silk Nehru-collared suits or white starched dhotīs and kurtās.

Prabhupāda held kīrtana with his disciples, and then he spoke, briefly and gravely. "You are all very intelligent persons," he said. "You are all very learned and educated. You are all very great persons. I beg you—I take the straw of the street between my teeth, and I beg you—just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Please chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

After his talk, Prabhupāda left, and the devotees showed slides of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's activities around the world. They also made their first public life membership appeal, and Mr. G. D. Somani, one of India's leading industrialists, as well as Mr. Seksaria, signed on as members.

Although Prabhupāda was happy to see the number of ISKCON's life members increasing, that his shipment of books from Dai Nippon had not yet arrived made him anxious. The devotees were promising life members books, but where were these books? Every day the problem became more and more pronounced.

Prabhupāda learned of a Calcutta port strike. His books had apparently arrived, but the ship, unable to unload cargo in Calcutta, had left port. He worried that the ship would unload the books in some other Indian port. The exact whereabouts and condition of the books, however, remained unknown. Prabhupāda was greatly concerned. He decided to send a competent disciple, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, to Calcutta to try and retrieve the books. Meanwhile he would continue preaching, depending on Kṛṣṇa.

* * *

Amritsar

October 21, 1970

Accompanied by a group of disciples (seven men and two women), Prabhupāda began the two-day train ride from Bombay to Amritsar. Years ago Prabhupāda had traveled as a preacher in India alone, riding the trains to Jhansi, Delhi, Kanpur, Calcutta, and Bombay to publish *Back to Godhead* and solicit support. After only five years in the West, he now had the great advantage of sincere disciples, and now the Indians were taking notice.

He had stationed Acyutānanda Swami, Jayapatāka Swami, Hamsadūta, and others in Calcutta; Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Śyāmasundara, and others in Bombay. His disciples would make life members and try to establish permanent ISKCON centers in two of India's major cities. His Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was beginning in India, and he wanted to travel with his disciples wherever there was an opportunity to preach. Just as he had worked in America—never settling comfortably in one place, but always traveling, speaking about Kṛṣṇa, meeting new people and offering them devotional service—so he would also work in India.

The train arrived at Kurukṣetra station. "Near here," said Prabhupāda, "Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke Bhagavad-gītā five thousand years ago. They say it does not exist—a mythological place. It is a symbol of the field of the body and the senses, they say. It is an allegorical place. But here we are at the station." As he spoke, the sun was setting, and a bright, orange sky shone over the flat land.

"How can they say Kurukṣetra is not a real place?" he continued. "Here it is before us. And it has been a historical place for a long, long time."

When the train arrived at Amritsar station, members of the Vedanta Sammelan committee received Prabhupāda and escorted him and his disciples to a park on the outskirts of the city. They showed him the large paṇḍāl the Niketan Ashram had erected for the Vedanta Sammelan and assigned him and his disciples their quarters—three small rooms. Prabhupāda took one room, the two women the second room, and four of the men crowded into the third, leaving three men to sleep outdoors on cots. The first night in the northern climate was cold. Available bedding was meager, and none of the devotees had brought warm clothing.

At four the next morning the devotees congregated in Śrīla Prabhupāda's room for maṅgala-ārati and kīrtana before the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa—the same Deities who had been traveling with Prabhupāda for the past one and a half years. Despite the austere conditions, the devotees felt fortunate to have such intimate contact with Prabhupāda and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda played mṛdaṅga, leading the chanting of prayers to the spiritual master. Afterward, he had the pūjārī distribute to each devotee a bit of the fruit and sweetmeats that had just been offered to the Deities. It was still before sunrise, and the room was chilly. As the devotees sat huddled beneath a naked bulb, Prabhupāda had them read aloud from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

That same morning Prabhupāda attended the Vedanta Sammelan. There were thousands of people in the audience, and since most of them did not understand English, Prabhupāda spoke in Hindi. His presentation pleased everyone, and the committee members honored him by making him president of the Vedanta Sammelan.

Although the program was scheduled only for several hours in the morning and evening, Prabhupāda did not limit his preaching to these times; he preached every hour of the day. While he sat in his room, a constant stream of guests came to him, hundreds of pious Hindus seeking his blessings. Recognizing this vestige of Vedic culture, he pointed it out to his disciples. "Just see," he said, "how they treat a saintly person."

Prabhupāda also began receiving the usual flood of invitations to visit the homes of Hindu families. He accepted as many invitations as possible—more than possible, it seemed to his disciples.

Prabhupāda moved quickly. When the cars were ready, he would come out of his room and go, leaving behind anyone who wasn't ready. After each engagement, he would get into his car and go directly to the next. Latecomers would sometimes find he had already left. They would then jump into bicycle rickshas and try to catch him. A wrong direction or a missed turn might make them miss the next engagement. And when at last they would catch up, they would find Prabhupāda coolly, gravely in the midst of a lecture on Bhagavad-gītā or laughing and taking prasādam with his host.

Every day brought at least a half-dozen engagements—"Come to our temple for darśana," "Come to our house for prasādam." And whenever Prabhupāda would return to his āśrama, he would find a long line of guests waiting to spend a few moments with him.

None of the devotees could match Prabhupāda's pace and enthusiasm. His energy seemed never to wane. For his disciples, being invited insistently to take a full meal at half a dozen homes in one day was too much. They tended to overeat, and some of them got sick. But Prabhupāda knew how to handle the situation expertly. He would fully satisfy each host, speak about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, hold kīrtana, take a little prasādam, and move on.

One evening, in response to an invitation, Prabhupāda visited the home of Baladeva Indra Singh, a descendant of one of ancient Punjab's ruling families. Although nearing sixty, Mr. Singh was still a robust Punjabi kṣatriya, handsome, tall, and sporting a big black mustache. He showed Prabhupāda and his disciples through his elegant home, with its large portraits of ancestors, uniformed kṣatriyas with their helmets and swords. In the trophy room, which had many animal skins and stuffed heads mounted on the wall, Mr. Singh brought Prabhupāda and his disciples before his prize trophy, a large tiger's head. Prabhupāda approached closely. "You have killed this?" he asked.

"Yes," Mr. Singh replied. And he described the details of the hunt. The man-eater had killed many people in a nearby village, Mr. Singh explained. "So I went and shot it."

Prabhupāda's eyes widened, and he turned to his disciples. "Oh, very nice!"

Later, Prabhupāda sat in a chair, and Mr. Singh sat before him on the floor. He said something was troubling him. An astrologer had told him that in a previous lifetime, thousands of years ago, he had fought in the battle of Kurukṣetra—but on the side against Kṛṣṇa!

"That's not possible," Prabhupāda said. "Everyone present at the battle of Kurukṣetra was liberated. If you had actually been at the battle of Kurukṣetra, you would not still be within this material world." Mr. Singh wasn't certain whether to feel relieved or disappointed. But Prabhupāda assured him, "That's all right. Don't worry. Now you are a devotee of Kṛṣṇa."

When Prabhupāda asked Mr. Singh to become a life member of ISKCON, he agreed immediately. He confessed that when he had first invited Prabhupāda and his disciples he had actually been skeptical, but after being with Śrīla Prabhupāda for a few minutes, he said, all his doubts and suspicions had vanished. He would be happy to become ISKCON's first life member in Amritsar.

Although the devotees requested Prabhupāda to take fewer engagements, he would not slow down. It was his disciples, he said, who were finding the pace difficult. One night, after the eighth and final engagement of the day, Prabhupāda returned to his room just a little before midnight. For the devotees the day had been exhausting, and they were eager to get to bed as soon as possible. Noticing Prabhupāda's light still on, one of them went to his window. Prabhupāda was sitting at his desk, leaning back against the wall, listening to a tape recording of one of the talks he had given that day.

* * *

One afternoon Prabhupāda and his disciples went to see the famous Golden Temple of the Sikhs. A guide took them around and answered Prabhupāda's questions. Sikh businessmen, the guide explained, maintained the temple and its expenses. The Sikhs pride themselves in the assertion that

no one in Amritsar goes hungry, and they daily feed dāl and capātīs to ten thousand people. This interested Prabhupāda, and he observed their massive operation. He watched the group of men rolling capātīs, flipping them deftly through the air onto a giant griddle while other men, using long paddles, turned the capātīs, held them briefly over the hot coals, and then placed them in stacks. "This is how to distribute prasādam," Prabhupāda said.

Prabhupāda signed the guest book "A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." Under Religion he wrote "Kṛṣṇaite." And under Comments he wrote "very spiritual."

Prabhupāda and his disciples visited Rāma-tīrtha-sarovara, the lake where in a bygone age the great sage Vālmīki had his āśrama. The terrain surrounding Rāma-tīrtha-sarovara was dry and rocky, and vegetation was sparse. As they stopped at the beautiful bathing ghāṭa, its steps leading down into the lake, the devotees were in a jubilant mood, happy to be on a field trip with their transcendental father and teacher. The peaceful lake and the beautiful ghāṭa seemed an ideal setting for being with Prabhupāda.

The devotees, who knew little of Lord Rāma, listened intently as Prabhupāda began to tell some of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His incarnation of Lord Rāmacandra. During the last days of His earthly pastimes, Prabhupāda said, Rāma banished Sītā, His wife and eternal consort. Pregnant and alone, Sītā sought shelter at the āśrama of Vālmīki, where she soon gave birth to a son, Lava. Vālmīki created another son for Sītā from straw and named him Kuśa.

When Sītā learned that Rāma was sending a challenge horse throughout the world, she instructed her sons to catch the horse. In this way, she concluded, they would capture their father and bring Him before her. Unfortunately, while the boys were away on their mission, they learned that Lord Rāmacandra had departed from the world. Grief-stricken, they returned to Vālmīki. To mitigate the boys' anguish of separation, Vālmīki sang to them Rāmāyaṇa, the transcendental narrative of Lord Rāma's activities. One day, as Sītā was out walking, the ground opened before her, and she returned into the earth from which she had appeared.

These events, Prabhupāda explained as he stood with his followers by Rāma-tīrtha-sarovara, had happened no less than eight hundred thousand years ago. For the devotees, it was as if Prabhupāda had opened a new door to the spiritual world.

* * *

The organizers of the Vedanta Sammelan repeatedly asked Prabhupāda and his party to play a larger part in the paṇḍāl program. The scheduled discourses were mostly on Māyāvāda philosophy: God is impersonal, all religious paths are equal and lead to the Supreme One, all is one, we are all God. Such dry speculations could not hold the public's attention, and the Sammelan organizers daily requested the devotees to hold kīrtana in the paṇḍāl. But with so much other preaching, Prabhupāda preferred holding programs of his own in private homes around the city.

A devotee asked Prabhupāda about a Māyāvāda slogan he saw posted: Tat Tvam Asi, with the English translation underneath: "You are that too." This was a favorite saying of the impersonalists, who imagine that the living entity is God, Prabhupāda said. He explained elaborately the

distinction between God and the living entity and told how God, when He appears, displays certain unmistakable characteristics that identify Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "These yogīs will just talk and talk Vedānta," Prabhupāda said. "It is simply mental speculation, and they never come to any conclusion. They will go on speculating for years and lifetimes, but we will realize God simply by eating." And from the plate of prasādam before him he took a sweet and popped it into his mouth.

In the midst of his activities in Amritsar, Prabhupāda continued to think of his spiritual children in various places throughout the world, and he regularly wrote them. To the devotees in Calcutta he wrote, "I am very much anxious to hear what you are doing there and if you have made any life members by this time." He asked them to register ISKCON with the government and try to establish a permanent center there.

To his disciples in Bombay he wrote, "I am very anxious to know your situation; whether you have removed to the Rāma Temple or where you are stationed now." To Karandhara in Los Angeles he wrote,

I hope everything is going on well with you in our Los Angeles World Headquarters.

Please send me a report of your general activities... and also your Governing Body Commission activities. Please offer my blessings to all the members of our Temples. How is the Deity worship being carried on?

Replying to Upendra in the Fiji Islands:

Regarding worship of demigods, the whole Hindu society is absorbed in this business, so unless our preaching work is very vigorous it is very difficult to stop them.

And to Bhavānanda in New York:

Please conduct the Samkirtan program regularly and that will give me great pleasure. Regarding our new temple in Brooklyn, Kṛṣṇa has given you very good chance to serve Him.

* * *

October 30, 1970

After ten days in Amritsar, Prabhupāda was on the train heading back to Bombay. He rode in a small first-class compartment with Guru dāsa, while the rest of his disciples rode in another part of the train. Prabhupāda's car, being close to the locomotive, caught soot from the engine's smoke stack, until he was soon flecked from head to foot with small black particles.

Yamunā: We were traveling between Amritsar and Delhi, and I decided to go see how Śrīla Prabhupāda was doing, if there was anything he wanted (because sometimes when the train stopped he would ask for a devotee to purchase fresh fruit and other things from the vendors on the train platform). So Kauśalya and I made our way through several cars to Prabhupāda's first-class

compartment. He was lying back on several pillows with one knee up, looking like a monarch. He had a beautiful smile on his face.

We paid our obeisances, and Śrīla Prabhupāda looked at us with a twinkle in his eye. "Is there anything hot to eat?" he asked. "What do you mean?" I said. "Do you want me to get your lunch, Śrīla Prabhupāda?" "No," he said, "not that. Some rice, some hot rice." I said, "What do you mean, Śrīla Prabhupāda—from the train?" He said, "Well, no. If you can make me some hot rice." I said I would.

I had no idea how I was going to prepare hot rice for Śrīla Prabhupāda, but Kauśalya and I found our way to the kitchen. Nobody was there, only two men dressed in black, turmeric-stained shorts, standing over the coal stove smoking cigarettes. I didn't know how to speak Hindi, but I said the best I could, "My Guru Mahārāja wants some cāvāl, some hot rice."

The men laughed at us as if we were crazy, and so I thought we had better find someone who would give us permission. But when we found the manager of the restaurant, he said, "No. Impossible. You can't cook in the kitchen." I said, "I'm sorry, this is for my Guru Mahārāja. There is no question of choice. I have said to him that I will fix rice, and I have to fulfill this." But again he said, "No, it is impossible."

I went and found the conductor of the train and explained the situation to him. "If I can't do this for my spiritual master," I said, "then I might as well jump off the train." The conductor took us very seriously and said, "Of course, of course, you can fix whatever you like in the kitchen."

So he brought us back to the kitchen and told the head of the kitchen as well as the head of the restaurant that he was giving us permission. The coal stove was gigantic, and I was completely unfamiliar with it. All sorts of aluminum pots and dishes were hanging around the kitchen. We cleaned out one of the pots as best we could, boiled the water, and put in the cāvāl. We prepared a gigantic platter of very hot rice with butter, fresh lemon, salt, and pepper and carried it through the train to Prabhupāda's compartment.

"Here's your rice, Śrīla Prabhupāda," I said as we entered. And his eyes lit up and opened wide. He gave a huge grin. "Oh, my goddesses of fortune have come," he said. "They have brought me my rice. Thank you very much. This is just what I wanted." He ate so much from this huge plate. He took a little kacaurī and purī with it, and a little pickle. He was very pleased.

That night the train pulled into the New Delhi station, with its scurrying crowds of passengers, hawking vendors, refreshment counters, newsstands, beggars, and coolies in their dingy red jackets. The stopover would be twenty minutes.

Suddenly a man appeared in Prabhupāda's compartment, identifying himself as D. D. Gupta. Although Prabhupāda had not met him before, they had corresponded. He was a Delhi man, not especially influential or wealthy, but he wanted to help. Offering Prabhupāda a box of sweets, he invited him to stay in Delhi. Prabhupāda, however, already had other plans and had even wired ahead to notify the devotees in Bombay of his arrival.

Prabhupāda looked over at Guru dāsa, who was feeling happy and especially blessed to have this intimate contact with his spiritual master. Twelve hours they had spent in the same compartment, eating together, talking together. Just minutes before, Prabhupāda had been stressing the importance of farming and explaining how the scarcity of food was due to mismanagement, not to lack of rain or arable land. Guru dāsa was happy, and he was looking forward to the next leg of the journey with Prabhupāda, anticipating the scenery and his return to Bombay.

"This man is inviting us," Prabhupāda said. "Get down and see what you can do."

"Get down?" There was hardly time to ask questions or discuss what to do in Delhi; the train would be leaving immediately. Guru dāsa said he would stay, but he would need help. He and Prabhupāda agreed on a team: Yamunā (Guru dāsa's wife), Girirāja, Durlabha, Bruce, and Gopāla. Guru dāsa ran to tell his wife and the brahmacārīs the news.

The devotees had little trouble picking up their light bags and getting off the train, but they felt sad to be leaving Śrīla Prabhupāda. As the train pulled away they offered obeisances outside Prabhupāda's window and waved to him, praying for his mercy. This was an austerity—perhaps a tiny drop of what Prabhupāda had gone through when he had first arrived in America.

* * *

Bombay

November 1970

For the next month, Prabhupāda and his disciples stayed at Manoharlal Agarwal's Sītā-Rāma temple in Chembur. Actually it was Mr. Agarwal's residence, but since he maintained the worship of Sītā-Rāma Deities he called his home Ram Sharanam, "under the shelter of Lord Rāma." Prabhupāda occupied one room, and his disciples two other rooms, with access to a kitchen and bath. The Sītā-Rāma temple and suburban neighborhood provided a peaceful atmosphere, and Prabhupāda returned to concentrated work on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, corresponding with ISKCON centers around the world and looking after the small group of disciples who were with him. He had great hope Kṛṣṇa would provide a way for ISKCON to become well established in India.

We are just now receiving great publicity and it is reported that Bombay has now got its atmosphere filled with Krishna Consciousness. It is a fact, and the important members of the Bombay community are appreciating our Movement...

For the present I am more prominent than all swamis. People are appreciating—What are these swamis? They cannot go outside. There is a Bengali saying that a jackal is king in a small forest. The story is that a jackal became king in the forest by fooling the other animals for some time, but he remained always a jackal and his ruse was at last exposed.

Although Mr. Agarwal was honored that Prabhupāda had accepted his invitation and was now living as his guest, Prabhupāda knew that the situation would ultimately prove inconvenient for everyone involved. To open one's home to a dozen guests and feed them daily was a strain, even for

a wealthy man; and for the devotees to live in those tiny quarters under the already trying conditions of irregular hours, frequent sickness, and tropical heat was not easy.

The solution, of course, was for the devotees to get their own place, an ISKCON center in Bombay. As a sannyāsī, Prabhupāda was prepared to stay anywhere, moving as often as necessary, accepting alms. He had lived that way for years before going to America. But now he had twenty spiritual children to support in India, and more on the way. They were not mature. He wanted them near him so that they could observe how he did things and imbibe the spirit of preaching in India.

When a Hindu organization in downtown Bombay requested a few devotees to attend a three-day program, Prabhupāda approved. But when the program was over and the leaders of the organization invited the devotees to stay on indefinitely, Prabhupāda said, "No. They will simply eat and sleep." Better for them to stay with him at crowded Ram Sharanam.

Mrs. Sumati Morarji, the wealthy director of Scindia Steamship Lines, had financed the printing of the third volume of Prabhupāda's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in 1964, and in 1965 she had provided him free passage to America. Now she invited Prabhupāda to speak at Scindia House, near Juhu Beach. Seated onstage, Prabhupāda and Sumati Morarji reminisced, celebrating Prabhupāda's success.

"I did not think you would come back alive," Mrs. Morarji said. "But I am so much pleased to see you." No longer was Prabhupāda the poor sādhu Mrs. Morarji had met six years ago. He was a success, and Sumati Morarji and her staff and friends were happy to hear about the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in the West.

Before Prabhupāda's lecture, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa formally introduced him to the audience. "Śrīla Prabhupāda left for the West five years ago from this city. He had almost no money. He went to New York, where he chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa in a park, underneath a tree. Soon he opened a temple, where he continued his chanting and held classes on Vedic philosophy. Many people came, and gradually he opened new centers: San Francisco, Montreal, Boston, and so on. Now he has many devotees and over forty temples. In each temple there is a full-scale program of saṅkīrtana, Deity worship, and prasādam distribution. India has sent many ambassadors and ministers to the West, but none of them can say that he made the Americans give up eating meat, fish, and eggs and got them to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Everyone is indebted to Śrīla Prabhupāda, because he came to relieve the suffering of all the fallen souls..."

Prabhupāda sang three verses from the Brahma-saṁhitā and invited the audience to join in the chorus: Govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi. After speaking for half an hour, he accepted prasādam with Sumati Morarji and honored guests and dignitaries. He met Dr. C. Bali and his wife, the famous dancer and movie actress Vaijayanti Mala. He spoke only briefly with them, and they became life members of ISKCON.

Vaijayanti Mala: Swami Prabhupāda made his preaching so simple that even a layperson would understand what our great philosophy and our great teachings meant. Not only was he propagating the great culture of our Lord Kṛṣṇa, but he was making the people of other parts of the world really understand its meaning and its significance. By his simple and yet very great teachings of Kṛṣṇa, he took this message so far and so wide that it's really a marvel that a person single-handedly could do

so much. He not only preached and, you know, just talked about the whole thing, but he also established so many centers in so many parts of the world. This is really amazing that he could do it in spite of all difficulties. But his perseverance and his persistence, I think, kept him on.

The public sensation of Prabhupāda's disciples chanting in the streets of Bombay and at the Sadhu Samaj had died down; the regular news coverage had stopped. Still Prabhupāda was sought after by many important people in Bombay. His accomplishments after five years in America commanded the esteem and attention of intelligent Indians, and daily he received respectable visitors who accepted him as the authority on Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Indians regarded Prabhupāda as unique. Even in a culture where swamis and holy men are commonly treated with respect, he was regarded as special. His visitors would beg him to come to their homes and sanctify them. And this was also in line with Prabhupāda's desire; he wanted to engage the Indians in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, hearing the philosophy of Bhagavad-gītā, and honoring the Lord's prasādam. He wanted them to appreciate the purity of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, enlist as life members of ISKCON, and help him establish a large center in Bombay.

In preaching to Indians, Prabhupāda would often urge them to return to their all-but-forgotten spiritual culture. "Our culture is Kṛṣṇa consciousness," he said before a group of Bombay citizens. "But we are forgetting and becoming too materially absorbed. Lord Ṛṣabhadeva says that this is not good, because according to the law of karma you will have to take another body. But you don't have to give up your hard struggle for material life. Arjuna was not advised to do this. He remained in his position and executed Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Prabhupāda concluded, "I am begging. I have forty-two temples in the West, and in each one there are fifty to one hundred disciples. Thousands of books have to be printed. Please help me with this movement."

Manoharlal Agarwal, Prabhupāda's host at Ram Sharanam, would often sit with him for hours, inquiring about spiritual life. Mr. Agarwal was particularly interested in hearing of Prabhupāda's work in America: How had he transformed so many Christians into Rāma bhaktas? Had he been alone, or had there been helpers? How did he dress in America? What was his approach? Prabhupāda recounted his early preaching on the Lower East Side of New York, and he explained how everything had happened by Kṛṣṇa's desire.

Mr. Agarwal doubted whether Westerners would be able to stay with Kṛṣṇa consciousness for very long. "Now in the radiance of your company," he said, "as long as you are here bodily and physically, they may continue to observe all these restrictions. But when your physical influence will not be there, one day when you will have to leave this world, then all these people that have come in contact with you, will they go bad?"

"No," Prabhupāda said firmly.

"Your claim is very tall," replied Mr. Agarwal. "Can you tell me what is the basic foundation of your claim?"

Prabhupāda reminded him that all his disciples had been initiated into the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and that according to the Vedic scriptures the constant chanting of the Lord's holy

name will save even the most fallen souls and protect them from falling again. Even after his passing away, Prabhupāda predicted, his disciples would not fall victim to *māyā*, as long as they continued their prescribed chanting.

One day Mr. Agarwal asked how long Prabhupāda and his disciples were planning to stay. Prabhupāda said that he was very happy staying where he was but would try to find a new place immediately. Mr. Agarwal insisted that he had no intention of asking Prabhupāda to leave; his home belonged to Prabhupāda, not to himself. He begged him to kindly continue to stay.

Prabhupāda said this reminded him of an incident from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and he told a story about Haridāsa Ṭhākura, the great devotee of Lord Caitanya. Haridāsa Ṭhākura used to live alone in a cave, where he chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa day and night. Many pilgrims would visit him, but when they learned that a python was also living within the cave, they became afraid. Although Haridāsa Ṭhākura was satisfied with his cave, he didn't want to inconvenience his visitors, so he said he would leave the cave that very day and not return again. Yet even as he spoke, the huge python came winding out from the back of the cave into the presence of all. Passing near Haridāsa Ṭhākura, the snake bowed his head to the ground and slithered away. The Supersoul within the heart of the python had impelled him to leave the cave so that Haridāsa Ṭhākura could remain.

Prabhupāda laughed as he told the story. "Agarwalji," he said, "you have said the same thing. You have said that you will go away and that we will stay. But no, no, we will go. We will go."

SPL 33: A Lot of Ground to Be Covered

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

A Lot of Ground

to Be Covered

= Indore

December 3, 1970

India continued to be like a dream for Prabhupāda's disciples, who gazed out the windows as the train moved them through India's unfamiliar rural world. The trackside bushes blossomed in yellow. Mile after mile of irrigated agricultural fields passed by—wheat, rice, sugarcane, and varieties of *dāl*. Small villages—mud-walled houses with straw roofs, or thatched walls with tile roofs—drifted peacefully by. An occasional village temple made of stone would rise above the surrounding simple structures. Cowherd boys with sticks tended their herds on the grassy banks of meandering streams. And the grazing cows, the oxen plowing in the ancient fields, the dung patties drying in the sun for fuel, the smoke rising from the cooking fires, and the smell of the warm earth—all were part of a peaceful, simple way of life the devotees were coming to appreciate through Prabhupāda's association.

Prabhupāda and his disciples were enroute to Indore, a city of 475,000 in the central Indian province of Madhya Pradesh, thirteen hours northeast of Bombay. The directors of the Gītā Jayanti Mahotsava, a festival to celebrate the teachings of Bhagavad-gītā, had invited Prabhupāda and his disciples to attend their convention and public meeting.

In Indore Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples settled into their quarters near the Gītā Bhavan, the site of the Gītā Jayanti Mahotsava. The directors of the convention had assigned Prabhupāda a bungalow with a lawn and garden and had provided nearby facilities for his disciples.

The devotees toured the grounds of the Gītā Bhavan, noting the many swamis and sādhus who had arrived from various parts of India for the Mahotsava. They saw the large paṇḍāl and stage, the eye hospital run by the Gītā Bhavan, and the diorama exhibit. The diorama exhibit they regarded as the kind of eclectic mixing of spiritual paths that Prabhupāda often referred to as "hodgepodge." Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Jesus, Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, and demigods and animals were all on display. While admiring the energy and imagination that had produced such an exhibit, the devotees questioned the benefit of such a conglomeration.

On the first night of the festival Prabhupāda was scheduled as the last speaker. His disciples, who sat with him onstage, grew bored and restless from the ordeal of so many hours of Hindi speeches. And knowing that these speakers were presenting Māyāvāda misconceptions made the evening especially painful. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat sternly and waited, his hand in his bead bag, his head held high, his lips murmuring the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

When Prabhupāda finally spoke, he began by explaining that in the West he was spreading the teachings of the Gītā as it is. Bhagavad-gītā, he said, could be properly understood only in disciplic succession, just as Arjuna, the original student of the Bhagavad-gītā, had understood it. The Gītā was for the devotee of Kṛṣṇa and should not be misinterpreted by nondevotees. To misinterpret the Gītā, he said, was to cheat in the name of religion. He also spoke strongly against pseudoincarnations.

Prabhupāda concluded his talk and asked his disciples to begin kīrtana. It was an ecstatic, spontaneous event, and Prabhupāda began dancing onstage along with his disciples. The crowd came to life and began clapping rhythmically. Hamsadūta jumped down from the stage, still playing mṛdaṅga, and began inducing members of the audience to join in chanting and dancing. Several other devotees also jumped down, and soon hundreds of people had risen to their feet, swaying, clapping, and singing: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This was the real Gītā Jayanti Mahotsava. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa was being sung, and everyone was happily united in the kīrtana.

Greatly pleased by the performance of Prabhupāda and his disciples, the paṇḍāl directors visited Prabhupāda the next day in his bungalow. Prabhupāda complained at having to wait so long before he could speak; his disciples shouldn't be required to sit through hours of speeches in a language they couldn't understand. When Prabhupāda intimated that the speeches seriously deviated from the teachings of the Gītā, the director of the Gītā Bhavan replied, "We do not favor any particular way. Followers of the Śāṅkara school and others also come to our institution. We do not subscribe wholly that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the sole God or anything of the sort. There is a power behind Him..."

This remark drew fire from Śrīla Prabhupāda. What kind of glorification of the Gītā was this if the speakers did not accept Kṛṣṇa as He is explained in the Gītā? The Gītā declares Kṛṣṇa to be the highest truth: *mattaḥ parataram nānyat*. Prabhupāda advised the directors of the Gītā Bhavan to try to understand the meaning of Bhagavad-gītā. The directors did not change their opinion, but they were intelligent enough to see that Prabhupāda was a great paṇḍita and saint, and they listened respectfully. Nodding, they said they accepted his point of view.

After the men left, Prabhupāda continued, “They are thinking that there is something beyond Kṛṣṇa or that it is the spirit within Kṛṣṇa that we have to surrender to. But they do not know that the within and the without of Kṛṣṇa are all absolute, eternal, and full of bliss.”

Prabhupāda said he could see that the organizers of the Gītā Jayanti Mahotsava had invited him to draw larger crowds. But they would not make him sit again through all the Māyāvādī nonsense, he said. From now on, he would go with his disciples, speak, chant, and then leave.

The next night, however, despite promises by the paṇḍāl directors, Śrīla Prabhupāda again had to wait until the end of the program before he could speak and hold kīrtana. This night, the crowd was larger than before, and they were clearly waiting for Śrīla Prabhupāda and the foreign sādhus. When Prabhupāda's turn came at last, he spoke and then asked his disciples to begin kīrtana.

During the kīrtana one of the members of the Gītā Bhavan gestured to the devotees to jump down into the crowd as they had done on the preceding night. But what had been a spontaneous event the night before could not be artificially staged simply as a crowd pleaser. The man, however, was insistent. He came forward to the edge of the stage, reached up, and began grabbing at the feet of the dancing devotees, trying to pull them into the audience. The devotees became annoyed. Grabbing indiscriminately, the man pulled at one of the women's sārīs. Śrīla Prabhupāda was also dancing, but when he saw this he rushed to the edge of the stage, swinging his karatālas toward the man's face and shouting, “Stop this!” The man retreated, and Prabhupāda and his disciples continued their kīrtana. Although little-noticed by the crowd, Prabhupāda's burst of lionlike ferocity had amazed his disciples.

The festival directors were once again pleased with Prabhupāda's lecture and kīrtana. But Prabhupāda sent them word that he would not again sit through the other lectures, waiting his turn to speak. He had wearied of hearing opinions on Bhagavad-gītā that avoided the conclusion of Bhagavad-gītā—surrender to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth. Some speakers made the Gītā an allegory, some said Kṛṣṇa was not an actual historical personality, and some simply took advantage of the Gītā's popularity to put forward their own political or social philosophies. A person with his own philosophy should write his own book, Prabhupāda said, not use as a vehicle for his own ideas the Bhagavad-gītā, a scripture worshiped by millions and respected throughout the world. Why should a conference under the name Gītā Jayanti become a forum for speculative philosophies? Bhagavad-gītā states that the Gītā itself is the essence of knowledge, meant to benefit the entire world. To misrepresent the Gītā, therefore, was the greatest disservice. Prabhupāda felt that by sitting through such a program, he and his disciples were tacitly approving the blasphemous speeches.

On the third night of the festival, Prabhupāda and his disciples came early to the stage, having been promised by the festival directors that they would be first on the program. But when another speaker stood and began his discourse, Prabhupāda, followed by his disciples, stood and walked off the stage. The festival director was quite disturbed by this, since most of the audience had come especially for the kīrtana. He pleaded with Prabhupāda to return, but Prabhupāda refused. He did agree, however, to send his disciples every night; they would speak and hold kīrtana.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples found the morning Bhāgavatam classes in Indore especially relishable. Not only was the setting intimate—ten devotees sitting with Prabhupāda in his room—but the Bhāgavatam story was intriguing, one they had never before heard.

“We are talking of Ajāmila, a brāhmaṇa residing in Kanyākubjā, presently known as Kanpur,” Prabhupāda began, and he narrated the story of Ajāmila's life, pausing from time to time to read the Sanskrit text or to elaborate on the story and its lessons. Ajāmila, a young brāhmaṇa, had strictly followed the religious principles, until he became infatuated with a prostitute. As Prabhupāda lectured he focused on the bogus speakers at the Gītā Jayanti Mahotsava.

“There are so many things to know, but these things are not being discussed here. It is very cheap to do whatever you like—you simply meditate and you become God. So much cheating is going on all over the world. The so-called yogīs say, “You meditate, and as soon as you are realized, you become God.’

“The Bhagavad-gītā is being interpreted in so many different ways. And these so-called explanations are being accepted by the innocent public as authoritative knowledge. Someone is explaining that kurukṣetra means this body, and pañca-pāṇḍava* means the senses. But this is not explaining. How can you explain the Bhagavad-gītā as it is when you do not understand it? Such an attempt is nonsense.”

In his second lecture Prabhupāda narrated more of Ajāmila's life: his leaving his chaste wife and going to live with the prostitute, his adopting illegal means for supporting her, his having ten children by her and living sinfully until his eightieth year. This story took place, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, thousands of years ago. “At that time there was only one Ajāmila, but you will find many Ajāmilas like that at the present moment, because it is the age of Kali.”

Ajāmila had great affection for his youngest son, Nārāyaṇa. And as Ajāmila lay on his deathbed and saw the agents of death approaching, he cried out for his son—“Nārāyaṇa!” Prabhupāda continued his story.

“He was just on the point of death, so—naturally he had affection for his son—so he was calling, “Nārāyaṇa! Nārāyaṇa! Nārāyaṇa! Please come here! Please come here!’ That is natural. I know my father—when he was dying, I was not at home. So he was living for one day to see me. He was

always inquiring whether Abhay has come back. Like that. So father's paternal affection is like that, and similarly Ajāmila was calling, “Nārāyaṇa! Nārāyaṇa!”

Nārāyaṇa is also a name of Kṛṣṇa. And Prabhupāda said that, according to Bhagavad-gītā, if a person remembers Nārāyaṇa, or Kṛṣṇa, at the time of death, he becomes liberated. One's mentality at death determines one's next birth. Because the devotee is Kṛṣṇa conscious, he enters the spiritual world at death; and because the materialist is absorbed in sense pleasure and mental speculation, he has to take birth after birth in the material world. Prabhupāda gave an example.

“One gentleman in Calcutta was a fairly big businessman. He was dealing in shares, stocks. So at the time of death he was crying, “Kamarhati! Kamarhati!” So the result might be that he might have taken his birth as a rat in the Kamarhati mill. It is possible. At the time of death, whatever you think, that will carry you to your next type of body.”

Because Ajāmila had called on the name of the Lord, even though referring to his son, he became purified of all sins. Yet because of his sinful life, the messengers of Yamarāja, the lord of death, also appeared, to take him for punishment.

“When Ajāmila was dying, he saw that there were three ferocious persons, very fearful persons, with ropes in their hands. Sometimes a dying man cries, because he sees somebody has come to take him to Yamarāja. He sees, and he is very fearful. So Ajāmila also became fearful. The assistants of Yamarāja have hair very curled, and the hairs on their bodies are standing. Now at the time of Ajāmila's death, the assistants of Yamarāja came to take him.”

Prabhupāda paused. “We shall discuss sometime again.” And he ended his lecture.

* * *

Prabhupāda began making life members in Indore by sending Hamsadūta out alone. Hamsadūta was inexperienced and even skeptical that anyone would pay the 1,111 rupees.

Hamsadūta: One day Prabhupāda told me to go to the market with a neighbor and take these books—he had three Kṛṣṇa books—and try to make some life members. Just show them the books, he said, and tell them this is a token of our work. Then ask them to please help our mission by becoming a life member for 1,111 rupees. I was thinking that no one was going to give one thousand rupees for two or three books, so I just didn't do anything about it. I just avoided the issue. The next day Prabhupāda gave me the same instruction, but again I didn't do anything. On the third day he said I had to go, so I went next door and got a man who took me to the cloth merchants.

We went to the shop of the biggest cloth merchant in Indore. The man didn't speak English, so the neighbor who had accompanied me translated. I would say, “Tell him this. Tell him that.” And the man would translate everything. After I had exhausted my presentation, I said, “Now ask him to give a check for 1,111 rupees.” My translator relayed the message, and the merchant immediately took out his checkbook and wrote the check.

Then we visited another merchant, and the same thing happened—he immediately wrote a check. We went to another merchant, and he also became a life member. So I made three life members on the first day, and when I came back and told Prabhupāda, he was in ecstasy.

By sending disciples and by sometimes going out himself, Śrīla Prabhupāda soon had a dozen ISKCON life members in Indore. Prabhupāda, Hamsadūta, and Girirāja visited the king of Indore and invited him to become a life member, but the king declined. The devotees were disappointed, and in the car on the way back to Gītā Bhavan, Hamsadūta asked Prabhupāda, “Did I say the right thing about the books?”

“My books are like gold,” Prabhupāda replied. “It doesn't matter what you say about them. One who knows the value, he will purchase.”

* * *

Because visitors often asked Prabhupāda and his disciples what they thought of various popular spiritual teachers, Prabhupāda gave his disciples hints on answering such questions. If the teacher was not a bona fide follower of Vedic scripture, Prabhupāda said, the devotee should reply, “Swami who?” By thus indicating that he had not heard of the particular teacher, he would minimize the teacher's importance. Then the devotee should ask, “What is this swami's philosophy?” When the person explained, the devotee could defeat the particular philosophy, without attacking the person.

India had many Māyāvādī gurus, Prabhupāda explained, and they often traveled in groups from one convention to another. Although each had his particular style, primarily they were interested in capātis. “And for every capātī,” he said, “there are many Māyāvādīs. So there is competition.”

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One of Prabhupāda's frequent visitors was Vairaghi Baba, an educated man who had visited America and who spoke fluent English. He regularly joined in the kīrtana with the devotees, chanting and dancing with them onstage, and when he visited Prabhupāda in his room he behaved with Prabhupāda in a familiar way—too familiar, Prabhupāda's disciples thought. But Prabhupāda tolerated him.

One day some devotees met Vairaghi Baba at a lunch engagement, and they noticed he was drinking tea. Almost naively, and yet with an air of challenge, one of the devotees asked why he was drinking tea. “Oh, I am an avadhūta,” Vairaghi Baba replied. The devotees, who had never heard this word before, reported the incident to Prabhupāda. “Avadhūta,” Prabhupāda explained, “means one who is beyond the regulative principles. Generally this refers to Nityānanda Prabhu.”* Prabhupāda disapproved of Vairaghi Baba's tea-drinking and especially of his calling himself an avadhūta.

A small group of devotees were sitting with Prabhupāda in his room one afternoon. “Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's excellence was Her cooking,” Prabhupāda said. “She could also sing and dance, but Her great service was Her cooking for Kṛṣṇa. Mother Yaśodā would ask Her personally to come and cook for Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys. So, all in a line, She would feed them prasādam.”

An Indian lady came to the door, bringing an offering of chidwa—fried cashews, potatoes, and raisins with spices. Śrīla Prabhupāda took some, then distributed the rest to the other devotees. “Do you like this?” he asked, turning to Yamunā.

“Oh, it is very, very tasty,” she replied.

“Yes,” he said, “you should learn to prepare this. I like it very much. My Guru Mahārāja was also fond of potato chidwa, and he would sometimes request it late in the afternoon. He was very fond of it.”

“Śrīla Prabhupāda,” a devotee asked, “may we publish pictures of you without tilaka?”

“Yes,” he replied, “my Guru Mahārāja has been recorded without tilaka. You have seen that picture where he is looking up from his books at his working table?”

“Yes,” the devotee replied, “I have seen that picture. I have seen you look in that very same way, with the very same expression as in the picture of your Guru Mahārāja.”

“You have only seen the glitter,” Prabhupāda corrected. “He is the gold. I am only iron. Iron can never be gold. But you have seen the glitter of real gold.”

One afternoon a renowned astrologer visited Prabhupāda and offered to read his palm. “No,” Prabhupāda replied, “I am finished with that. But you may read my disciples' palms.” The astrologer read the palms of the several devotees present, made his predictions, and then left. The devotees turned to Prabhupāda, wondering what to make of it. “As soon as you clap your hands in front of the Deities during āraṭi,” Prabhupāda said, smiling, “all the lines of your palm are changed.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda told his disciples a story about when he had lived in Vṛndāvana. A Bengali widow walked to the Yamunā River to take her bath every morning. And every morning without fail she would return with a pot of water for the Rādhā-Dāmodara pūjārī to use in bathing the Deities. Prabhupāda said he would sometimes open the gate for the woman, since he also rose very early, and she would enter and wake the pūjārī.

“Although the Vṛndāvana nights are cold in the winter,” Prabhupāda said, “the woman never once failed to come with the water. For this activity she will return back to Godhead. One who cannot rise early in the morning is not very serious about spiritual life. One must rise before the brahma-muhūrta hour—that is very auspicious. And one will take the trouble to do so if he is serious about spiritual life.”

One day Prabhupāda was sitting outside near his bungalow, chanting on his beads, when an unknown man approached, calling out the names of Kṛṣṇa. Suddenly the man fell to the ground, rolling and crying, appearing to be in great ecstasy. Prabhupāda remained seated and observed the exhibition but made no response. The man continued his crying and rolling and chanting;

Prabhupāda now ignored him completely. After several minutes, the man got up and walked away, obviously disappointed.

Early one morning as Prabhupāda sat in his room with his disciples, a gentleman entered and tearfully announced that his mother was dying. The devotees, watching for Prabhupāda's reaction, saw him remain grave. He didn't try to reassure the man or preach to him, but made only a very mild comment. Prabhupāda was unpredictable. He was always Kṛṣṇa conscious, and he always acted in accord with guru and śāstra. But exactly how he would act in a given situation was unpredictable. Whatever he did, however, was Kṛṣṇa conscious and correct, and he was always instructing them by his example.

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On Prabhupāda's last morning in Indore he continued the story of Ajāmila. He explained that because Ajāmila had uttered the holy name, he had immediately obtained salvation, even though he had been so sinful.

“So Ajāmila, at the time of his death, just remembered his youngest son, whose name was Nārāyaṇa. The very name of Nārāyaṇa has got the full potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa. That is the secret of this nāma-saṅkīrtana movement. By chanting the holy name of Nārāyaṇa, you immediately contact with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Nāma, the Lord's name, is not material—it is spiritual. Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's name, there is no difference...

“In a very appealing voice Ajāmila began to ask his son Nārāyaṇa, “Please come here. I am dying.’ He was very afraid of the Yamadūtas.

“Kṛṣṇa sent the Viṣṇudūtas to give Ajāmila shelter. The Viṣṇudūtas looked just like Lord Nārāyaṇa, with four hands. With a grave voice, they said to the Yamadūtas, “What are you doing? Stop! You cannot take this man to Yamarāja.”

Prabhupāda ended his lecture—and his stay in Indore. Having accepted an invitation to travel to Surat in the state of Gujarat and hold Kṛṣṇa conscious programs, he and his disciples would be leaving shortly. Devotees from Bombay would also join them. Prabhupāda had come to Indore for the Gītā Jayanti Mahotsava, but actually the Mahotsava was but a small part of his preaching in Indore. He had met hundreds of people, made life members and friends. He had touched their lives. His presence in Indore would leave a lasting impression.

Baba Balmukund: I've seen many sādhus and great saints in this Gītā Bhavan. I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda also in the same place. I was very much impressed by Śrīla Prabhupāda and his preaching. It was because Prabhupāda had revealed the reality about bhakti, because he was a pure bhakta, that he could change the people of the West and give them another dress, he could give them another diet, he could entirely change their culture and give them true bhakti. And this was the greatest thing Prabhupāda has done. Let the world say as it likes, but he has done a marvelous thing regarding Lord Kṛṣṇa's bhakti. What Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ram Tirtha, and others could not do, Śrīla Prabhupāda has done. It is a marvelous thing.

* * *

Surat

December 17, 1970

It was like a dream come true. Thousands lined the street for many blocks, while the devotees, playing karatālas and mṛdaṅgas and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, made their way along. Spectators stood on rooftops or clustered at windows and doorways, while others joined the procession. The police had stopped traffic at the intersections, allowing only the kīrtana procession to pass. The earthen road, freshly swept and sprinkled with water, had been decorated with rice flour designs of auspicious Vedic symbols. Green, freshly cut banana trees adorned either side of the way. Overhead, women's sārīs strung like bunting across the narrow roadway formed a brightly colored canopy over the kīrtana party.

Mr. Bhagubhai Jariwala, Prabhupāda's host in Surat, had advertised the daily parade routes in the local newspapers, and now, day after day, the devotees were holding a kīrtana procession through various sections of the city. While more than twenty of Prabhupāda's disciples led the daily procession, thousands of Indians chanted, cheered, and clamored to see, and women threw flower petals from the rooftops.

Often the procession would have to stop as families came forward to garland the devotees. Sometimes the devotees would receive so many garlands that their blissful faces would be scarcely visible, and they would distribute the garlands to the people in the crowd. Never before had the devotees met with such a reception.

"It is a city of devotees," Prabhupāda said. He compared the people of Surat to dry grass catching fire. By nature they were Kṛṣṇa conscious, but the arrival of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his saṅkīrtana party had been like a torch, setting the city spiritually ablaze.

The entire population of Surat seemed to turn out every morning, as tens of thousands flocked at seven A.M. to the designated neighbor hood. Men, women, laborers, merchants, professionals, the young, the old, and all the children—everyone seemed to be taking part. Cramming the streets and buildings, they would wait for the kīrtana party, and when the devotees arrived, everyone became joyous.

Prabhupāda attended only a couple of the morning processions, preferring to stay in his quarters at Mr. Jariwala's home. Each morning Prabhupāda would come out onto his second-floor balcony, just as the devotees were leaving. Although the mornings were cold and many of the devotees sick, seeing Prabhupāda on the balcony offering them his blessings eased their troubles. Prabhupāda would wave, and the devotees would set off down the street, chanting.

The devotees had no special paraphernalia other than mṛdaṅgas and karatālas—no flags, no marching band, no ratha (cart), just an enthusiastic kīrtana party. And there was no official paṇḍāl, no Sadhu Samaj, no Vedanta Sammelan, no Gītā Jayanti Mahotsava—just an entire city of Kṛṣṇa bhaktas waiting eagerly for the American Hare Kṛṣṇa chanters.

To be worshiped for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa was just the opposite of what the devotees had experienced in the West. In Hamburg, Chicago, New York, London, Los Angeles, the devotees had been insulted, threatened with arrests, assaulted, and ignored. Of course, sometimes they had been tolerated and even appreciated, but never honored.

The daily saṅkīrtana outing was exhausting, since the route was long and the stops frequent. Many of the devotees had sore throats from singing, and the usual digestive upsets persisted. But the devotees took everything as the mercy of Lord Caitanya, who was allowing them to engage a whole city in His saṅkīrtana movement.

Twenty devotees from the West had just arrived in Surat, as had an American photographer, John Griesser, on assignment for Asia Magazine. John went out every day to shoot the kīrtana processions, and as he did he felt himself becoming caught up in something much greater than a mere photo assignment.

The people of Surat, who considered themselves Kṛṣṇa bhaktas at heart, saw Prabhupāda as a great saint. And they saw his disciples, in whom they found the true Vaiṣṇava qualities, as saints also. The devotees' dress, behavior, and way of life showed pure bhakti-yoga, and their kīrtana was genuine worship of the holy name. By honoring the Lord's devotees, the people of Surat knew they were honoring Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Devotion to Kṛṣṇa was the heart of their own culture, yet they had never expressed it to such a degree as now.

After several days of kīrtana processions, the mayor of Surat, Mr. Vaikuntha Sastri, closed all schools and proclaimed a holiday throughout the city. Everyone was now free to celebrate the mercy of Lord Caitanya and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Signs throughout the city read, in Gujarati, "Welcome to the American and European Devotees of Krishna," and "Welcome to Members of the Hare Krishna Movement."

The devotees felt tired and blissful as they returned to Mr. Jariwala's home, and Prabhupāda was waiting for them. As soon as they saw him, they all bowed down.

Cidānanda: Prabhupāda was at the foot of the stairs, greeting us. We were in complete bliss, with flower garlands all over us, big smiles on our faces. We were very happy that we had been so well received. It was as if Prabhupāda was standing there saying, "Just see how wonderful this Kṛṣṇa consciousness is! Just see how happy you are!" He was standing there smiling. He was so happy that we were happy.

The devotees were not alone, however, as they returned to Mr. Jariwala's home, for hundreds of Indians thronged behind them, eager to see Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda, his disciples, and a clamoring crowd of Surat devotees squeezed tightly into Prabhupāda's room. The guests— those who got in— inquired about ISKCON and its activities, while those outside pushed to get inside. The crowd around the house grew so great that traffic couldn't pass. While Prabhupāda continued to answer questions inside, the crowd outside grew larger and more restless. By their good fortune, they had realized Prabhupāda's greatness, and they wanted to be with him. As their desire became

stronger, their eagerness more intense, Prabhupāda got up from his seat and walked out to the balcony. The crowd roared, "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" their arms upraised.

When Prabhupāda returned inside, the crowd remained unsatisfied, and he asked some of his disciples to try and pacify them. Several devotees went out to the people, answering their questions and telling them Prabhupāda would come out to see them again.

Bhagubhai Jariwala had come in touch with Prabhupāda's movement several years before in San Francisco, when he had donated a silver mūrti of Kṛṣṇa to the San Francisco temple. Now the Jariwala family, to accommodate their guests, had moved into modest quarters on the roof of their home and offered the rest of the house to Prabhupāda and his disciples. Hospitable hosts, they made the devotees feel welcome to stay forever.

At lunch and again in the evening, Prabhupāda would take prasādam with the devotees and guests, the devotees sitting in rows on the floor and Prabhupāda sitting at the head, in a chair at a table. Mr. Jariwala and his family would serve everyone. Often respectable citizens would also attend the lunches. Mr. Chandra Desai, the chief minister of Gujarat; Mr. Vaikuntha Sastri, Surat's mayor; the state education minister; and others attended.

The prasādam was the finest Gujarati cooking, and when a dish was particularly to Prabhupāda's liking he would ask one of his women disciples to learn from Mrs. Jariwala how to cook it. Honoring prasādam twice a day with Prabhupāda was another intimacy the devotees shared with their spiritual master in India. Had they been with him in any other part of the world, such intimacy would probably have been impossible.

Beginning at 4:30 A.M. Prabhupāda would hold kīrtana and āratī before Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and lecture from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. His room would be filled with guests, including the members of the Jariwala family. Although at outside engagements Prabhupāda usually spoke Hindi, in these morning meetings he always spoke English, for his disciples. He continued lecturing on Ajāmila, focusing on Ajāmila's degradation due to bad association and on his deliverance by chanting of the holy name. To Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, who were all aspiring to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa purely and go back to Godhead, these topics were urgently relevant. He was speaking of them.

"Anyone who utters the name of Kṛṣṇa is immediately freed from all sinful activities. That is the power of Kṛṣṇa's name. The difficulty is that after being freed we again commit mistakes. Kṛṣṇa's name has got the power—as soon as you utter the name you immediately become freed from all contaminations. But if one thinks, 'I am chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, so even if I commit sinful activities it will be counteracted by my chanting,' that is the greatest offense. Just like sometimes in Christian churches they go on Sundays and confess and they are supposed to be excused from sinful reaction. But again, after coming back from the church, they commit the same sin with the expectation that 'Next week when I go to the church I shall confess, and it will be counteracted.' This kind of understanding is prohibited... If you accept spiritual life and at the same time go on committing sinful activities, then you will never be able to progress."

Prabhupāda's outdoor evening engagements were well attended. The city officials made one of Surat's main intersections a festival site, rerouted all traffic, and set up a stage and sound system.

Thousands would gather nightly. The crowd was sometimes so large and excited that Prabhupāda would have difficulty speaking above the noise, so he would hold a kīrtana. In the quiet that followed, he would have one or two of his disciples speak. Then he would speak. If the audience again became noisy, he would again say, "All right, let us have kīrtana." Or sometimes he would simply sit and distribute bits of crystalized sugar candy to the thousands who approached him to touch his lotus feet and take a piece of prasādam.

Girirāja: All the area around this block was completely packed with people. They were all mad after Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although a very big area, still people were occupying every space available, perching on rooftops, looking out windows, sitting on odd cement boulders or blocks scattered here and there.

Everything about Prabhupāda's program was completely satisfying to everyone. The old people liked it because there was the saintly figure of Śrīla Prabhupāda with his young foreign disciples. And the intellectuals liked it because Śrīla Prabhupāda was giving such sound philosophy. And the children liked it because they could run and dance and join in the kīrtana.

Mādrī dāsī: At one program they mobbed us so, we couldn't even get out of the cars, they were so eager to see Śrīla Prabhupāda. There were so many people. Prabhupāda said, "All right, the next night will be a night for ladies only." So the next night only ladies came, but still it was just as packed, and Prabhupāda gave a wonderful lecture.

Bruce: One program was so noisy that no one stopped talking, so Prabhupāda just started chanting the *Brahma-saṁhitā*. That was the whole program. He just chanted the *Brahma-saṁhitā*. Then he gave up and went out.

Cidānanda: Before going out to attend these programs, Prabhupāda looked like a general getting ready to go out for battle. He would come out of his room, beautifully dressed and effulgent, ready to go out and fight māyā. There were thousands and thousands of people waiting. I didn't know what to make of it. I couldn't handle so many people. But Prabhupāda was waging war on māyā. He was there to convince all these people, and the more people would come, the stronger he would get.

Prabhupāda preached in the outlying villages also. He would ride in a car with Mr. Jariwala, several disciples, and his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities to Bardoli or Meol. The village dwellings were made of baked mud, with straw roofs and cow dung walls and floors. For Prabhupāda's visit the villagers drew rice flour designs on the ground outside their houses and lined their lanes with clay pots, plantain leaves, and coconuts.

Mr. N. D. Patel: The people in my village were much impressed by the presence of Prabhupāda. They used to say that he has done miracles by chanting. "He is a miracle saint, no doubt," people were saying. "So many Western people have become devotees, just by chanting the name of the Lord." The people were very much impressed by Prabhupāda's practical way of bhakti. In his lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda created such a good impression, not only on Vaiṣṇavas but so many Christians, Parsis. Even some Muhammadan friends started believing in Lord Kṛṣṇa as the universal Godhead.

With regards to all the saints, nobody has been able to spread this philosophy like this in the past. In our village we are already Vaiṣṇavas, of course, but we used to believe in Sūryajī, Durgā, Ṭhākurajī, and all these things. But after Prabhupāda's explanation of what is Gītā, what is Lord Kṛṣṇa, we are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. After Prabhupāda conducted his discourse here in the village, the people were so impressed that even in his absence they chant the mahā-mantra loudly and they greet people with the words "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa." At the time of departure the people wished every devotee and Prabhupāda with the words "Hare Kṛṣṇa!"

When there were no outside engagements, Prabhupāda would sit in his room and receive visitors. To a member of Parliament who came to visit, Prabhupāda said that wherever he traveled he encountered the concept of India as a beggar, backward and poverty-stricken. Ambassadors from India, he said, had only reinforced that image by going to Western countries and begging, "Give me rice, give me money, give me alms." India, Prabhupāda explained, had the greatest wealth of spiritual culture and the knowledge of Bhagavad-gītā. Prabhupāda had taken this wealth to the West and given it away freely. He was not a beggar.

Yamunā: During visiting hours, riding in the car, walking, standing, or sitting, Prabhupāda was chanting japa all the time in Surat. His fingers were always moving within his saffron bead bag. He was always a Vaiṣṇava—the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, well groomed, with beautiful, neat tilaka on, and his hand was always in his bead bag. As he was sitting to greet people, one would be struck by his inconceivable beauty. Śrīla Prabhupāda said persons who give themselves to others are called magnanimous. And this was how Śrīla Prabhupāda was during his pastimes in Surat. He was always delivering Kṛṣṇa to everyone he met. He affected people's hearts by his great potency.

Every morning in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class Prabhupāda added another installment of the Ajāmila story. Sometimes he would refer to the degradation of Indian culture, citing specific examples he had seen during his India tour.

"Now I am very sorry to inform you that in your city I have seen two temples—they are known as Rama Mandir. But there is no Rāma. This cheating is going on, and you are accepting. There is no Rāma Deity worship, but a man's photo is there, Sri Rama. And people are so foolish they do not question why this is going on. In Indore I have been in the Gītā Bhavan, and so many nonsense things are there. Another place I saw Gītā Samiti, and there was not a single photograph of Kṛṣṇa, but a lamp is there. And this is in the name of dharma.

"Last night this boy informed me that Bhagavad-gītā is going to be distributed by some swami, but according to Bhagavad-gītā that swami is fool number one. He is distributing Bhagavad-gītā, and people are accepting and paying for it. This is going on. It is a very serious situation all over the world. In the name of dharma [religion], adharmā [irreligion] is going on."

Just as Ajāmila had become degraded, Prabhupāda explained, Indian culture had also become degraded. The only hope was for people to return to their rightful position of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

“So all over the world—not only in India—there cannot be peace unless you reform the whole social structure. And that can be done only by this movement, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now see how this man fell down. Lusty people—they don't care for society, they don't care for elderly persons, they do it in the road, in the street, on the sea beach, anywhere, in the cinema. These things are going on. It is advertised also in the cinema nowadays to attract people. Formerly in India it was not so. But they are introducing all of this nonsense to make people more lusty. To become lusty means he is going to hell. If you want to open the door to your liberation, then you should engage yourself in serving the mahat, the pure devotees. If you want to open the door to the hellish condition of life, then you mix with those who are too much attached to women.”

He spoke of the slaughterhouse and continued to decry the public display of illicit sex. Regarding illicit sex, he said that what had been a rare incident in the time of Ajāmila was now a common affair.

“How can young people protect themselves? They are not trained up. This Ajāmila was trained up, and yet he fell down. I saw in many parks, such as Golden Gate Park, within the cars the young boys and girls... Now here it is said that this behavior is expected of the śūdra, not from the higher castes. So just try to understand. They are thinking that they are becoming advanced. But they are not becoming advanced. They are becoming degraded. The whole world is degraded, and India is also imitating their degradation. How, by degraded association, one becomes himself degraded—that this story will reveal.”

Prabhupāda had accomplished in Surat what he had intended. He had given the holy name, and the people had embraced it. The people of Surat, though not prepared to alter their lives radically and live as ISKCON devotees, appreciated that Prabhupāda had turned Westerners into devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa and that he was teaching the pure message of the scriptures and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. They had responded to Prabhupāda not out of a dogma or ritual but out of an appreciation of the importance of spiritual life and a recognition that Prabhupāda and ISKCON were genuine.

For Prabhupāda's disciples, the visit to Surat had given them a glimpse of what the world would be like if everyone was a devotee.

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Allahabad

January 1971

Kumbha-melā is the greatest congregation of human beings on earth. Every twelve years in Allahabad, sādhus and pilgrims from all over India gather at the Trivenī, the confluence of the three holy rivers Ganges, Yamunā, and Sarasvatī. And at an auspicious time that assures the worshiper liberation from the cycle of birth and death, as many as fifteen million people enter the sacred waters. A smaller version, the Māgha-melā, takes place annually during the month of Māgha (December-January). January of 1971, however, happened to fall halfway through the twelve-year cycle from one Kumbha-melā to the next, and the Melā was known as Ardha-kumbha-melā.

Millions would attend, and Śrīla Prabhupāda decided to take advantage of the opportunity and attend the Melā with his disciples to preach.

While his disciples took the train from Surat to Allahabad, Prabhupāda, accompanied by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Hamsadūta, Nanda Kumāra, and others, went briefly to Bombay and then to Calcutta, where he satisfied himself that his shipment of books from Dai Nippon was safely stored at a Scindia warehouse. He also purchased twenty-four-inch brass Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities to take with him to Allahabad. On January 11 he wrote,

...tomorrow morning we are going to Allahabad to attend the Ardha Kumbha Mela festival. We shall be going all 40 strong devotees and there are an expected 7,000,000 going by there also for the month of Magh.

About twenty-five devotees had taken the train from Surat to Allahabad, and others, newcomers from the U.S. and England, would soon be arriving. After a twenty-three-hour train ride, the first group arrived. As they disembarked, they could see only fog. With the address of a brahmacārī āśrama where they were to stay until they could pitch their tents at the Melā site, they started forward.

The devotees knew little of what to expect as they crowded into several one-horse ṭāngās and proceeded toward the appointed brahmacārī āśrama. They had heard that the Kumbha-melā was the most auspicious time to bathe at the Trivenī and that the water was icy cold. In the foggy morning, they saw pilgrims along the road, riders on camels, and guards carrying rifles. Reaching the āśrama at sunrise, they could see the sacred Ganges before them.

The next morning the devotees started for the pilgrimage site, joining the stream of pilgrims funneling toward the Trivenī. As they passed the Ram Bhag train station, a sign read, "From this point the confluence of the holy rivers Ganges and Yamunā and the forts are five kilometers." Riding in bicycle rickshas, the devotees merged with the moving tide of pilgrims, and soon they saw before them, on what one week before had been an empty plain, a city of tents. From the small tents, big tents, and giant paṇḍāls with flags flying rose a dissonance of sounds—music, loudspeaker announcements in different languages, bhajanas, and the hum of prayers.

The devotees got down from their rickshas, paid their drivers, and proceeded ahead, moving with the flow of pilgrims. As they walked, the ground transformed from grass to sand to mud, and the amplified music and the din of mantras and chants increased. The entire way was lined by beggars with leprosy, elephantiasis, and deformities.

The Melā committee had given ISKCON a good location near one of the entrance gates, and a few of the experienced devotees engaged workers in setting up the tents. ISKCON's paṇḍāl was large and brightly colored, with three smaller tents close by—one for the men, one for the women, and one for Śrīla Prabhupāda. A flimsy shack of corrugated tin served as a kitchen. Prabhupāda was to arrive the next day, and the devotees worked quickly putting down hay and rolling out darīs (large carpets of coarse cotton fabric). The devotees would have to build their own fires, gather their own vegetables, wash their own clothes, and do everything for themselves—all in the middle of a cold, barren sand flat. It was a far cry from being served like princes at a life member's home.

The devotees were in the midst of a great religious festival and human spectacle, and without Prabhupāda most of them were bewildered by the strange sights and sounds. Yogīs sat all day in the same posture, while crowds stood watching. Trident-carrying Śaivites, with simple red cloth, rudrākṣa beads, and matted hair, sat smoking gañjā. A procession of elephants, followed by two long files of naked sādhus, strode by. An ascetic lay on a bed of thorns. And there were still others, extreme renunciants rarely seen by the rest of civilization. And of course the various Hindu sects abounded, their chants and prayers rising into the air to mingle with the morning mist and the smoke from the ten thousand campfires that clouded the sky above the city of tents.

When Prabhupāda arrived at the ISKCON camp the next day, the devotees were ecstatic. Eagerly they began to tell him of the bizarre sights of the Melā. One of them mentioned a guru riding on an elephant and added, "Actually, you should ride on the elephant."

"No," Prabhupāda replied, "I would put Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa there."

Prabhupāda's presence reassured his disciples, reminding them that spiritual life was neither exotic nor bewildering, but simple and practical. In Prabhupāda's presence the devotees' attractions to mystic yoga, Vedic rituals, and material blessings and benedictions vanished. They accepted that great spiritual benefit awaited the pilgrims at the Melā, but as Prabhupāda had said, "To go to a holy place means to find a holy person and hear from him. A place is holy because of the presence of the saintly persons." The devotees understood, therefore, that the greatest spiritual benefit lay in hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Sitting in his tent with his disciples, Prabhupāda explained the significance of Ardha-kumbha-melā. For millions of years, he said, this had been among the most sacred places in India. During the appearance of the tortoise avatāra, when the demons and demigods had been churning immortal nectar, a drop of that nectar had fallen here. Since then, every six and twelve years certain auspicious planets form a jug, and this jug, filled with immortal nectar, is said to pour that nectar upon the Trivenī. Lord Rāmacandra and Hanumān appeared here in Allahabad, and here Lord Caitanya taught Rūpa Gosvāmī the science of devotional service. Prabhupāda said he had also lived in Allahabad with his wife and family, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had initiated him at Allahabad's Rūpa Gosvāmī Gaudiya Math in 1932. As for the Melās, anyone who came and bathed at the auspicious times when the prāṇa was pouring down from the heavens was guaranteed either promotion to the heavenly planets or liberation.

John Griesser: I talked with other so-called gurus, and they were very impersonal. They didn't seem to care so much for persons, especially Westerners. They had a dislike, sort of a disdain, even though occasionally some of them would have a Western disciple. Prabhupāda was completely different. He didn't seem so much concerned about externals but was very concerned about a person's philosophy, his consciousness. And of course he always tried to inject Kṛṣṇa consciousness into everyone he met.

Prabhupāda said that although most of the saints and sādhus present were inauthentic, many were perfect yogīs, some of them three and four hundred years old. These yogīs, from remote parts of India, would come out for the Melā and then return to seclusion. "I have personally seen," he said,

"that they take bath in the Ganges and come up in the seven sacred rivers. They go down in the Ganges and come up in the Godāvarī River. Then they go down and come up in the Kṛṣṇā River, and go down, like that." The devotees, therefore, should respect everyone who attended the Melā.

"So actually it's true," one of the devotees inquired, "that just by bathing here they are liberated?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "it's true. They come here for liberation. But we have not come for liberation. We have come to preach. Being engaged in Kṛṣṇa's unalloyed devotional service, we are already liberated. We are not interested in liberation. We have come to preach devotional service."

When Prabhupāda rose early the next morning, the temperature was near freezing. His tent had no heat. He walked to the paṇḍāl to lead the kīrtana at maṅgala-ārati, and as he sat on his vyāsāsana a disciple handed him his quilt, which he wrapped around himself. To rise and bathe in such cold was difficult for most of the devotees. A few went to the Ganges, others bathed at a nearby pump, and some refused to get up at all.

Girirāja: The program was very rigorous, because it was bitterly cold at night and we were expected to get up at four o'clock in the morning and bathe and attend maṅgala-ārati. So a few staunch devotees like Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Haṁsadūta got up early—by three or three-thirty—and walked all the way from our camp to the Ganges to take an early-morning bath. But those of us staying in the brahmacārī tent were not so staunch, and generally when it was time to get up at four o'clock it was so cold out that we preferred to remain in our sleeping bags.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also started to notice that some of us were coming late to maṅgala-ārati and that some of us were not coming at all. Prabhupāda became very upset about this, because he knew how important maṅgala-ārati was for us. So one morning, although he was a little frail in health, he got up at four o'clock and came out in his gamchā, sat down under the pump, and took that ice-cold bath early in the morning—just to encourage us to get up, bathe, and come to maṅgala-ārati. That had a very profound effect on all of us, and we felt so ashamed that we just couldn't sleep late any more.

After kīrtana Prabhupāda lectured on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, resuming the story of Ajāmila. This particular story, with its glorification of the Lord's holy name, seemed especially relevant. The holy name was so powerful that by chanting only once Ajāmila had been saved. Chanting, therefore, was far more beneficial than the prāṇa coming down from the constellations.

Dawn came and the sky lightened—but only barely. A damp, heavy fog from the river, mingling with the smoke from the campfires, clung to everything. Rain began to fall. The devotees were unprepared for this weather. With food hard to get and toilet facilities the crudest, the devotees wondered how they would last for the scheduled two weeks.

Prabhupāda, however, who shared with his disciples all these austerities, remained transcendental and apparently unaffected. If the sun peeked through the clouds, he would sit outside and take his massage. Then he would bathe himself, sitting in his gamchā, dipping his loṭā into warmed Ganges water, and pouring it over his body. He seemed so content, the devotees took heart. He wasn't complaining, so why should they?

Early in the morning, Prabhupāda took the devotees out chanting. He wore his gray woollen cādar and his swami hat strapped under his chin, and his disciples dressed in the warmest clothes they had—sweaters, hats, cādars. Prabhupāda led the party as they weaved and wandered through the densely populated tent city. The kīrtana was a joy to the other pilgrims. Ironically, amid such an exotic gathering of yogīs, renunciants, naked sādhus, and the like, Prabhupāda and his disciples created the greatest stir.

And they were preaching. Although other groups were uttering mantras or lecturing in their tents, there was nothing else like this. This was the only saṅkīrtana, and everyone welcomed it. With Prabhupāda stately but joyful at the head, the procession grew, and Indians joined the Western sādhus in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda sent the devotees out on saṅkīrtana each morning. As the kīrtana party roamed from camp to camp, many pilgrims would run up, offering prostrated obeisances, money, and respect. With strong, experienced street kīrtana drummers and chanters like Madhudviṣa, Dīnanātha, and Haṁsadūta leading the chanting party, the devotees would forget the cold and the austerity.

Prabhupāda stressed the importance of chanting; always there must be kīrtana, he said. Philosophy and lectures would not be as effective at such gatherings, because the common people would not understand. Lord Caitanya had never lectured in public, but always He had held kīrtana.

As a result of the devotees' kīrtana, thousands would stream into ISKCON's large paṇḍāl to see the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities and take prasādam. ISKCON had the only Kṛṣṇa Deity at the whole Melā, and thousands would line up to see Him. Prabhupāda would speak in English in the morning and in Hindi at night, and his evening kīrtanas in the paṇḍāl became a great success. The Western sādhus with the women and the little child were a great curiosity to behold.

Prabhupāda also arranged for mass prasādam distribution, and he as signed Revatīnandana and a few helpers to cook almost nonstop over two small wood fires in the kitchen shed. Some nights the devotees would cook vegetables and halavā or vegetables and purīs for as many as seven hundred people. ISKCON's impact on the Melā pleased Prabhupāda.

In the meantime our program for touring India has been going with all success in every place we are invited. Now we have come to the Ardha Kumbha Mela at Prayag (Allahabad) and we have got undisputed prominence amongst all groups here in the large gathering.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures on Ajāmila gave life to the cold and sometimes sick devotees. This opportunity to hear from Prabhupāda was the reward for all their austerities. In each morning class, Prabhupāda continued to stress the importance of chanting the holy names purely.

“The purification of one's chanting hari-nāma means as soon as you chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa you will see the form of Kṛṣṇa, realize the qualities of Kṛṣṇa, remember the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. That is pure chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. That is stated in the commentary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī—that a pure devotee who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra immediately realizes the nāma, rūpa, guṇa, līlā,* everything about Kṛṣṇa, simply by chanting the names. You will feel the form of Kṛṣṇa. You will

remember all His qualities—"Oh, Kṛṣṇa is so qualified; He is so magnanimous.' Then you will remember His līlā, pastimes—"Oh, Kṛṣṇa instructed Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa played with His cowherd boys. Kṛṣṇa had very nice talks with the gopīs, with His mother, Yaśodā.' These things you will remember. That is the actual perfection of chanting."

Prabhupāda reiterated that the only reason he had come with his disciples to the Melā was to glorify Lord Kṛṣṇa so that others could understand the importance of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But if the devotees were to successfully give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others, they must first realize Kṛṣṇa themselves. It was possible, he said, to think of Kṛṣṇa always. He gave the example of the Indian women carrying big waterpots on their heads. Just as they have learned to keep their balance, in spite of all other movements, so a devotee, despite his activities and despite any mental agitation, should always remember Kṛṣṇa. And the best way to remember Kṛṣṇa is to practice always chanting the holy name.

"I remember one of our teachers in our school life instructed that if you always think, 'I shall pass my examination with distinction,' then you will pass in the first division. If you think, 'I shall pass my examination in the first division,' then you will probably pass in the third division. And if you think, 'I will somehow or other pass my examination in the third division,' then you will fail. This means that if you expect more than your capacity, then it may be possible that at the time of examination you will pass. So when chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said not that you chant only one hour—no. One should practice, and that practice was shown by Haridāsa Ṭhākura (who chanted almost twenty-four hours daily). But because we cannot, therefore we have to engage always in the service of Kṛṣṇa. That will make you remember Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda said that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is exactly like a lion's roar. As a lion's roar frightens all small creatures, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa ends all one's sinful reactions. He repeatedly warned the devotees, however, to avoid the most dangerous offense, that of committing sins on the strength of the holy name.

"But even if you fall down, there is no loss. That is the statement of Nārada. If one takes to Kṛṣṇa sincerely and executes devotional service but then again falls down, still he will come back. Just like we have practical experience. Some of our students have fallen down. But whatever sincere service he has rendered, that is his permanent credit. And one day he will be saved, just like Ajāmila."

On Prabhupāda's last day in Allahabad a Mr. Gourkishore visited him in his tent, inviting him to Benares. As chairman of the 45th annual festival commemorating Lord Caitanya's visit to Benares, Mr. Gourkishore wanted Prabhupāda to attend the festival as the honored guest. When Prabhupāda said he felt ill and that perhaps some of his disciples could go in his stead, Mr. Gourkishore persisted until Prabhupāda finally agreed. But first Prabhupāda wanted to visit Gorakhpur.

* * *

Gorakhpur

February 3, 1971

The Ardha-kumbha-melā over, some devotees went to Delhi, some to Bombay, and others to Calcutta. Prabhupāda and the remaining devotees went to Gorakhpur—a ten-hour journey on the antiquated meter-gauge railway. Prabhupāda had been invited by his only disciple in Gorakhpur, Dr. R. P. Rao (now Rāmānanda), a research chemist who had met Prabhupāda in San Francisco, taken initiation in 1967, and since returned to his family and four children to teach chemistry at Gorakhpur University.

Prabhupāda and his disciples moved into crowded quarters at Rāmānanda's modest home, and about one hundred people attended Prabhupāda's lecture that evening. Prabhupāda already had plans for a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple on the Gorakhpur University campus as well as accredited courses and degrees in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. He envisioned graduates going out to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in schools, colleges, and temples all over the world. He inspired Rāmānanda and a group of his friends to form a committee to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness within the university, and he initiated about one dozen disciples. Since they all professed to be following the rules against illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling and had been lifelong vegetarians, he waived the usual six-month trial period. He asked them to chant sixteen rounds daily and to make their city Kṛṣṇa conscious. In his absence they should maintain Rāmānanda's home as an active ISKCON center and try to establish courses in Kṛṣṇa consciousness at the university.

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Benares

February 6, 1971

Mr. Gourkishore was counting heavily on Prabhupāda's participation in the upcoming celebration. The climax of the week-long observance of Lord Caitanya's visit to Benares would be a parade, Mr. Gourkishore said, and Prabhupāda and his disciples had an important part in it. Newspaper articles, handbills, and loudspeaker carts had announced throughout the city the presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his "foreign disciples." The devotees sensed they were being treated like entertainers, expected to perform as if under contract—but without salary.

On the day of the procession Prabhupāda rode in a silver chariot, the kind customarily used in extravagant wedding processions. The chariot was pulled by a pair of white horses, wearing silver crowns and decorative blankets. The leading float in the parade bore a six-foot statue of Lord Caitanya in yellow nim wood. Next followed a file of decorated elephants. One elephant carried a banner reading Harer Nama Eva Kevalam, one carried actors dressed as Lord Rāma and Sītā, another carried two actors dressed as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who waved to the crowds, and another a picture of Lord Caitanya and His associates performing saṅkīrtana. Next came a decorated flatbed truck with children portraying Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda, chanting and dancing. Then followed a series of professional kīrtana groups and Prabhupāda's "foreign disciples" dancing and performing kīrtana.

Behind the devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda rode in his chariot. On either side of the chariot walked a devotee fanning Prabhupāda with a cāmara whisk, while Prabhupāda sat with his right hand in his

bead bag, his left hand on his cane. He was dressed in silk, with pearl buttons on his kurtā. A wide patch of sandalwood paste covered his forehead. He didn't wave or smile or turn to see the crowds, but sat calmly, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on his beads.

Following Prabhupāda's chariot was a śāhnāi group, several more kīrtana parties, and finally another statue of Lord Caitanya, carried by eight men.

The festival committee said three hundred thousand attended, double what they would have had without Prabhupāda and his foreign disciples. The procession was over, however, and as the star attraction, Prabhupāda had made his appearance and drawn a large crowd, and now nothing more was required. He felt tired. He and his disciples were taken to a nearby dharmasālā and served a feast. Prabhupāda remained grave and as soon as possible returned to his quarters and his regular schedule.

A student at the University of Benares who had met Prabhupāda at the Allahabad Melā stopped by to visit. The boy's father had given him a biography of Lord Caitanya as a gift for Prabhupāda, and when the boy showed Prabhupāda a picture of his father, Prabhupāda said, "Yes, your father is a devotee. So why don't you also take initiation?"

The boy was hesitant. As he walked with Prabhupāda in the garden, Prabhupāda said, "You have got the seed of devotional service from your father, so you must now cultivate."

"But how can I shave my head?" the boy inquired. "I am a university student."

"No, it is a custom. You should shave once, and then you can keep short hair."

"But how can I wear tilaka? They will laugh at me."

Prabhupāda said the boy should not fear criticism. He should become a soldier of Kṛṣṇa. Just as the government honors its valiant soldiers, Kṛṣṇa rewards a devotee who accepts difficulties and criticism on His behalf.

"What about guru-dakṣiṇā?" the boy asked.

"Guru-dakṣiṇā is just a formality," Prabhupāda said. "It was a custom in olden days that when someone gets initiation, he goes to the various homes. It is a sign that you have become a servant of your guru, you are prepared to beg alms for your guru. It is whatever you give."

The boy returned home and told his father. The next day was an auspicious day, his father said—the appearance day of Lord Nityānanda. A good day to receive spiritual initiation.

So the next day, on Nityānanda Trayodaśī, Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated the boy, giving him the name Nirañjana dāsa. When Prabhupāda asked Nirañjana if he had any questions, Nirañjana said he wanted to know his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa; was it as servant, as friend, as parent?

Prabhupāda replied that servitude was the common ground in all transcendental relationships with Lord Kṛṣṇa. By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Nirañjana would become more and more purified and realize more and more his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Nirañjana asked how he would understand his relationship.

"No, don't jump," Prabhupāda said. "You have some śraddhā [faith] from your father, and now you are associating with devotees and chanting. Gradually you will realize."

Nirañjana agreed to be patient.

Prabhupāda asked Nirañjana to arrange a lecture for him on campus, and Nirañjana, with the help of his uncle, a philosophy professor, got Prabhupāda a speaking engagement for his last morning in Benares.

On the day Prabhupāda was to leave, he met with John Griesser, the American photographer traveling with him and his party since Surat. John, who had shaved his mustache and thought a lot about his future, came to say good-bye—until Bombay, where they would meet again in a few weeks.

John found Prabhupāda in the courtyard, enjoying the sunshine and eating gur (date sugar) from a clay pot. Prabhupāda asked that the pot be broken and distributed to John and the other devotees present, and while John sat licking gur from a piece of clay pot, Prabhupāda talked about his boyhood in Calcutta.

John: Prabhupāda was talking in his accented, rhythmic English about his boyhood days in Calcutta, and he described a gracious city, before the crowding and squalor of today. As a schoolboy he had seen splendid Victorian buildings of white marble, surrounded by stately lawns and trees.

Suddenly Prabhupāda looked over at me and laughed. "So, John," he said, "I think Kṛṣṇa has captured you." I agreed I had known it for quite a while, but now Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed it.

When Prabhupāda was leaving Benares to return to Gorakhpur, many of his disciples went to the wrong train station. While Prabhupāda and a few followers waited at the correct train station, Kauśalya asked him, "How did you like it here in Benares, Śrīla Prabhupāda?"

"It is all right," he said, indifferently.

"Did you have a nice rest?" she asked, trying to think of some positive aspect of the visit.

"Rest I can have any time," said Prabhupāda. "But I like to be with my devotees."

Surrounded by luggage, Prabhupāda sat on the bench, while Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Śyāmasundara ran from the ticket office to the train and back. The train would leave soon. But where were the other devotees? Prabhupāda watched as his spiritual sons argued with the conductor, telling him the

train couldn't go until the other devotees arrived. "They do not know what they are doing," Prabhupāda said, and he smiled.

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Gorakhpur

February 10, 1971

On hearing that Prabhupāda wanted to preach in Gorakhpur, Hanuman Prasad Poddar, eminent head of the Gītā Press publishing company, offered one of his properties, a two-story house (his former residence), known as Krishna Niketan. Mr. Poddar, who was bedridden in another house in Gorakhpur, had first met Prabhupāda in 1962, and he appreciated Prabhupāda's mission.

When Prabhupāda received permission to use the Krishna Niketan, he acted quickly. It was not proper, he said, that the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa he had brought from Calcutta had been packed away in a trunk after the Ardha-kumbha-melā. They had already been worshiped, so Their worship should not be stopped. "The Deities have to be installed tomorrow," he said, and he put Kauśalyā and Nanda Kumāra in charge of the preparations.

Seeing that Nanda Kumāra and Kauśalyā needed more help, Prabhupāda called for all his disciples, and soon twenty American devotees were scurrying about, preparing for the next day's festival. Prabhupāda directed the devotees in cleaning the temple room from ceiling to floor and in building the altar. He asked Himāvatī to donate her fanciest sārī, which he hung like a curtain before the table that was to be the Deities' altar. The altar needed a backdrop, he said, and while Kauśalya stood on the table he handed her pieces of colored fabric to arrange against the wall. The backdrop completed, Prabhupāda took a rug a devotee had bought in Allahabad and placed it over the table-altar.

That night Prabhupāda surveyed the temple room. "Oh, it is very nice," he said. He retired to his room, and two devotees stayed up all night sewing clothes for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The next morning the Deities were placed on the altar, and the devotees resumed Their worship, offering Them prasādam and āratī six times a day.

The devotees were living in an ISKCON temple atmosphere for the first time since they had arrived in India, and their lives became regulated and secure. The weather warmed, and the devotees—many of whom had exhausted their health in Allahabad—felt relief. The Gorakhpur temple was situated on several acres of agricultural land outside the city; it was a peaceful place. During the day Prabhupāda would rest, as the sunshine came through the window and warmed his body.

In the evenings guests would come for kīrtana and Prabhupāda's lecture. Speaking on the Sixth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Prabhupāda referred repeatedly to Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary, from the twelfth century.

Śrīdhara Svāmī said that simply by chanting—without any regulative principles—one becomes liberated. So how is that? Śrīdhara Svāmī replies, also, that there are regulative principles. The idea

is that chanting of the holy name is so powerful that it can immediately liberate the chanter. But because we are prone to fall down again, therefore there are regulative principles...

"Morning, noon, and evening, we should daily chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra with devotion and faith. By doing this, one can avoid volumes of miserable conditions of life—simply by chanting. So one should be so much careful and faithful. You should know that as soon as you are chanting, Kṛṣṇa is dancing on your tongue. Therefore, how much careful and respectful we should be."

Each night Prabhupāda would take the commentaries of Śrīdhara Svāmī as his text.

"So Śrīdhara Svāmī gives this example, that without knowing that there is a very nice medicine a man takes so many thousands of medicines. Similarly, the great stalwart leaders of religious principles, without knowing this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, take so many troublesome ritualistic ceremonies. Actually, there is no need. The whole thing is—Śrīdhara Svāmī is giving the stress very strongly—that you can simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra without understanding any ritualistic ceremonies..."

Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary was filled with quotations from various scriptures about the supreme benefit of chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa.

"Then Śrīdhara Svāmī says, akhila-ceṣṭitam. That means that any endeavor for pushing on Kṛṣṇa's glories, that is as good as chanting the holy name. When you go out for canvassing, for pushing on this movement, people might think that you are not chanting. But suppose you are canvassing for a life member—that topic is also as good as chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, because it is akhila-ceṣṭitam. One's life must be dedicated simply for Kṛṣṇa's service."

Speaking before his Indian audiences, Śrīla Prabhupāda also told about his preaching in the West. One evening he gave a personal history, describing how his spiritual master, on their first meeting, had immediately told him to preach Lord Caitanya's message to the English-speaking world.

"At that time I argued with him that we are a dependent nation, and who is going to hear about our message? So he defeated my argument. Yes. He was a learned scholar. So what I was? I was a tiny boy. So I agreed that I was defeated." Prabhupāda laughed softly.

Prabhupāda told about his business years in Allahabad and how he again met his spiritual master and became initiated. He told of starting Back to Godhead in 1944, of taking sannyāsa, and of finally traveling to America in 1965. He mentioned his struggles in New York City and how the first boys had joined him when he started his movement in a storefront on Second Avenue.

"So practically we began work from 1968. In 1966 I started, but in '67 I became very much sick, so I came back to India. And again I went there in 1968. Practically this propaganda work began vigorously from 1968. From '68, '69, '70, and this is '71. So three, four years, all these branches have grown up, and now practically throughout the whole continent of Europe and throughout America they know what is Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, due to our propaganda."

Early each morning before sunrise, Prabhupāda would sit in the temple room before his disciples and lecture from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. And each morning the lights would go out, leaving everyone in darkness. It was a typical Indian power failure, and Prabhupāda would stop lecturing while a devotee lit two candles by his vyāsāsana and two candles on the altar. Long shadows would mix with the luminous gold of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, and Prabhupāda, wearing spectacles and holding open the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in his hand, would appear wonderfully mysterious.

One morning Śrīla Prabhupāda sang a new song, Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava.

"I will teach you this song," he said. Reciting the first line, he had the devotees repeat it again and again. One line at a time, he went through the song.

jaya rādhā-mādhava kuñja-bihārī

gopī-jana-vallabha giri-vara-dhārī

yaśodā-nandana braja-jana-rañjana

yāmuna-tīra-vana-cārī

They should know it, he told them, by the next morning.

Only a few devotees managed to memorize the song, so the next morning Prabhupāda went through it again, line by line. During the evening lecture he explained the meaning of the song.

"Jaya rādhā-mādhava Kuñja-bihārī. Kṛṣṇa is enjoying in Vṛndāvana. That is the real picture of God—simply enjoying. The vṛndāvana-līla of Kṛṣṇa is the perfect presentation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead—He is simply enjoying.

"All the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana—the gopīs, the cowherd boys, Mahārāja Nanda, Yaśodā—everyone is simply anxious how to make Kṛṣṇa happy. They have no other business. The residents of Vṛndāvana have no other business than to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa has no other business. Yaśodā-nandana braja-jana-rañjana yāmuna-tīra-vana-cārī. He is acting as the little son of Yaśodā. And His only business is how to please the residents of Vṛndāvana.

"Yaśodā-nandana braja-jana-rañjana yāmuna-tīra-vana-cārī. He is wandering in the forest of Vṛndāvana on the bank of the Yamunā. This is the actual picture of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

"But Brahma, Indra, big, big demigods, they are also bewildered. They are sometimes mistaken how this cowherd boy can be the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Just like some of us think like that. But those who are thinking like that, for them also there is manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's supremacy. Gopī-jana-vallabha giri-vara-dhārī. Although He is engaged in pleasing the residents of Vraja, when there is need He can lift up the Govardhana Hill at the age of seven years. Or He can kill the Pūtana at the age of three months.

“So many demons used to visit daily. Kṛṣṇa used to go with the calves and cows, with His friends in the forest, and every day Kamsa used to send a demon to kill Him. Aghāsura, Bakāsura, Dhenukāsura—so many.

“So also, Kṛṣṇa is playing just like a cowherd boy. His supreme mercy as the Supreme Personality of Godhead is never absent there. That is God. God is not created by meditation. God is God. God is never manufactured. We should know this.”

On the third morning after introducing Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava, Prabhupāda again sang it with the devotees responding. Then he began to explain it further. Rādhā-Mādhava, he said, have Their eternal loving pastimes in the groves of Vṛndāvana.

He stopped speaking. His closed eyes flooded with tears, and he began gently rocking his head. His body trembled. Several minutes passed, and everyone in the room remained completely silent. Finally, he returned to external consciousness and said, “Now, just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

After this, the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities of Gorakhpur became known as Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava.

Kauśalya would regularly wash the temple floor while Prabhupāda gave his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam lecture. One morning Prabhupāda interrupted his lecture. “Just see this girl,” he said—Kauśalyā was down at the other end of the room, scrubbing. “This is first-class service.”

The next day Prabhupāda called Kauśalyā forward. “Every morning you are washing the floor so nicely,” he said, “but this morning you are washing the floor like a crow takes a bath.” Prabhupāda shook his hand, as if flicking water about. “You do not know how to wash the floor. I am going to show you.” Prabhupāda came down from his vyāsāsana and walked to the other end of the room, followed by all the devotees.

“Where is your bucket?” Kauśalyā brought over her bucket. Prabhupāda asked for a rag. She gave him hers. He then crouched down and started scrubbing. “This is how you wash the floor,” he said, “—with lots of water. And you do it a section at a time.” It should be done in two stages: first with a wet rag, and then with a wrung rag.

The devotees stood in amazement, watching. Several times Prabhupāda repeated the procedure, washing a section of the floor and then drying it, careful not to touch the clean area with his feet. “See?” he said. “That is expert.”

When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa requested Prabhupāda to move on to Bombay and bigger preaching, Prabhupāda replied, “Let us see if Kṛṣṇa wants us to have this place.” Hamsadūta also became restless to preach, and Prabhupāda sent him with a group of brahmacārīs to Aligarh and Agra.

Little appeared to be happening in Gorakhpur, but Prabhupāda had plans. He was still negotiating with the university authorities for land for constructing a temple.

If we are successful in our attempt, it will be unique in all the world and soon more and more college campuses will follow... And if we can establish a seat of Krishna Consciousness then

students may take their doctorate degree in Krishna Consciousness and go out and preach all over the world.

Prabhupāda had three goals: to reach the Gorakhpur university students, to introduce kīrtana into the factories, and to introduce kīrtana into the homes. The main obstacle was lack of commitment from the local people. Many were willing to attend his evening lectures, but to actually surrender time, money, and energy in the service of Kṛṣṇa was more difficult. At least the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple was lively, and Prabhupāda hoped the directors of Gītā Press would turn the Krishna Niketan building over to ISKCON permanently.

Prabhupāda continued lecturing, morning and evening. For three consecutive evenings he spoke on a single verse of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, defeating the Māyāvāda arguments that the Absolute Truth is ultimately impersonal Brahman.

“The Māyāvādī philosophers say that the Absolute is impersonal and that there is no different energy. So Caitanya Mahāprabhu's challenge is that the Absolute Truth has got multienergies. Suppose someone has a big business, a big factory. So if the proprietor says, “I am all-pervading over this factory,’ that is correct. Take, for example, Birla. They say, “Birla's factory.’ Birla's name is there. Although Birla is a person and he is not personally present in that factory, everyone says, “Birla's factory.’ That means Birla's money, Birla's energy, is there. If there is any loss in that factory, the suffering goes to Birla. Or if there is any gain in the factory, the profit goes to Birla. Therefore Birla's energy is there in the factory. Similarly, the whole creation is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. Everything there is Kṛṣṇa, His energy. He is represented by His energy. That is called simultaneously one and different, acintya-bhedābheda-tattva.”

Discussing preaching in America, Prabhupāda said the Western world was ninety-nine percent in the modes of ignorance and passion. Although America was the richest nation on earth, its youth were becoming hippies, much to the dismay of parents and government leaders. So despite their wealth, they were unhappy. They were ripe, however, for understanding spiritual knowledge.

“This is the causeless mercy of Lord Caitanya. Now you can see that these boys, when they are chanting—how they are in ecstasy. They are immediately on the transcendental platform. Not only here, everywhere they are chanting—in every temple. The advantage of these boys and girls is that they have no hodgepodge in their head. They directly accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and they directly accept the instruction of Lord Caitanya. Therefore they are making advancement. Their fortune is that their brain is not congested with hodgepodge ideas. They have given up all other occupations and accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So in India we can also do that. What is the difficulty? We must do this. Just accept this: kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam.* And surrender unto Him.”

Prabhupāda celebrated the appearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī in Gorakhpur. At the morning gathering he said, “We should honor this day and very respectfully pray to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī that “We are engaged in your service, so give us strength. Give us intelligence. We are being guided by your servant.’ So in this way we have to pray. And I think in the evening we shall distribute prasādam. There will be so many guests coming, so they can be distributed prasādam.”

Prabhupāda said life members and other friends should be invited for the flower offering at noon. One of the devotees asked about the feast.

Prabhupāda: "Feasting means purī and halavā and a vegetable and chutney. That's all—four things. Make it simple."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "Prabhupāda? You want us to offer a feast to your Guru Mahārāja at noontime? A special plate of feast?"

Prabhupāda: "Not a special plate. The process is that whatever we offer to the Deity, that is offered to guru. And guru offers to his guru. In this way, it goes to Kṛṣṇa. We don't directly offer to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. No. We have no right. Nor does Kṛṣṇa accept in that way. The pictures of the ācāryas—why are they there? Actually you have to offer the plate to your guru, and he will offer to his guru, he offers to his guru, his guru. In this way, it will go to Kṛṣṇa. That is the process. You cannot directly approach Kṛṣṇa or predecessor ācāryas. That is not possible."

One day Prabhupāda visited Hanuman Prasad Poddar. Mr. Poddar had been gravely ill for some time, but he was able to sit up and speak briefly with Prabhupāda. As the pioneer of the Kalyana magazine, which printed installments of the Mahābhārata and other Vedic classics, Hanuman Prasad Poddar was a world-famous patron of Indian religious thought. His inexpensive Hindi Bhagavad-gītā translation had been distributed by the millions, so that even a poor man could have a copy of Bhagavad-gītā. Mr. Poddar had been a friend to Prabhupāda when in 1962 Prabhupāda had come to him in Gorakhpur and shown him his manuscript for the first volume of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Appreciating the importance of the work, Mr. Poddar, by his word of approval, had helped Prabhupāda get a donation for its printing from the Delhi industrialist Mr. Dalmia. Now, almost ten years later, Prabhupāda was showing Mr. Poddar his recently published books Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, The Nectar of Devotion, and his magazine Back to Godhead. Mr. Poddar was impressed, and he and Prabhupāda exchanged their sincere appreciation of each other's work.

Mr. Suryakant Fogla: Hanuman Prasad Poddar was my grandfather. He was very much ill at the time Prabhupāda came here to meet him in his bedroom upstairs. There are certain things which cannot be explained, but they were talking in the language of their eyes. My grandfather expressed some gratitude, some affection, some regard by his eyes, and Prabhupāda's reply was also in the same way. The appreciation from both sides could easily be seen and appreciated by the persons who were present. A lot of Prabhupāda's disciples were there, and everyone was almost in tears when those two saints, great people, met and talked to each other.

They were talking about the spiritual world, and they were praising each other for their deeds. My grandfather also was saying that what Prabhupāda has done, it is unforgettable for anyone of the world. Because to take our Indian culture to Western countries—the credit entirely goes to our beloved Prabhupāda. And he was the only person who took Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the holy name outside—in such a way that nobody else could and will be able to in the future.

Since Mr. Poddar was ill and weak, Prabhupāda left after about half an hour. Prabhupāda had spent two weeks in Gorakhpur, and now he was eager to go to Bombay. Leaving two disciples behind to attend to the Deity worship and continue preaching in Gorakhpur, he left.

* * *

ISKCON's Bombay headquarters was a four-room flat on the seventh floor of the Akash-Ganga Building. Rent was nearly three thousand rupees a month, and the devotees had no guaranteed monthly income. Yet because the building was in a vital, prestigious location, Prabhupāda had taken the risk. Such a headquarters would be a necessary base for the preaching he wanted to do in Bombay, and his next preaching would be a grand eleven-day paṇḍāl program. "If you are going to hunt," Prabhupāda said, "then you should hunt for a rhinoceros. In that way, if you don't succeed, everyone will simply say, 'Oh, it couldn't be done anyway.' But if you do succeed, then everyone will be surprised. Everyone will be amazed."

As Prabhupāda revealed his plans for a gigantic paṇḍāl festival, the devotees became keenly aware that Prabhupāda's inspiration was motivating all their preaching; without him they could never attempt anything so bold and ambitious as a giant paṇḍāl festival in Bombay. Often "the American and European disciples" had been billed along with him, as if of equal importance, but the devotees saw themselves as only foolish servants trying to help the genuine pure devotee of the Lord. Although Prabhupāda credited his disciples, his disciples knew that Prabhupāda was Kṛṣṇa's empowered representative. He was their authority and personal link to Kṛṣṇa; his words and actions evinced full transcendental potency. As Kṛṣṇa was unlimited, Śrīla Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa's dearest friend, was entitled to demand unlimited service on Kṛṣṇa's behalf. In the service of Kṛṣṇa, no project was impossible. Impossible, Prabhupāda said, was a word in a fool's dictionary.

But as Prabhupāda unfolded his plans for the paṇḍāl festival, the devotees doubted: How could they ever raise the money? How could they erect such a huge tent? Where would they get so much food? And who would cook it? Prabhupāda seemed amused at their doubts. "You are all Americans," he said. "So what is the use of being American unless you do something wonderful?"

A Bombay paṇḍāl, Prabhupāda said, would be the perfect way to link America's ingenuity with India's spirituality. He gave the example of a blind man and a lame man. Although separately they are helpless, by cooperating—the blind man carrying the lame man on his shoulders, and the lame man giving directions—the two can work successfully. America, because of materialism and ignorance of God, was blind. And India, because of foreign invasions, poverty, and misinterpretations of Vedic knowledge, was lame. America had technological advancement and wealth, and India had spiritual knowledge. The job of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was to combine the two strengths and uplift the world. And one practical application would be the Bombay paṇḍāl festival.

Prabhupāda divided the work, assigning Śyāmasundara to publicity, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa to the paṇḍāl arrangements, Girirāja to fund-raising, and Madhudviṣa to the scheduled programs onstage. Catching Prabhupāda's spirit of "shooting the rhinoceros," Śyāmasundara organized a massive publicity campaign, with giant posters and banners strung across the streets, announcing "His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda will speak in English language about the

science of God. Prasādam distribution and bhajan singing will be led by his American and European bhaktas—Hare Krishna Festival at Cross Maidan—March 25 to April 4."

Girirāja: Śrīla Prabhupāda took Bombay by storm. The whole city was alive with excitement about the Hare Krishna Festival. We had banners at all the major intersections in Bombay. We had posters up on all the walls, many posters on every wall, and we had very big advertisements in the newspaper, with a beautiful picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda superimposed over a globe, and the words Bhagavat Dharma Discourses: A Hare Krishna Festival. World Preacher of Bhakti Cult, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.

Day by day the momentum grew more and more, and every day something new was happening. Finally, in the last two days, we got a huge billboard at Victoria Train Station, the busiest intersection of downtown Bombay. By then everyone knew so much about the festival and where it was going to be and everything that all this billboard said was Hare Krishna in huge letters. By then everyone knew, so just these two huge words Hare Krishna was enough.

Then Śyāmasundara had arranged for a big helium-filled balloon that was attached to a very long rope at the Cross Maidan site. That balloon just hovered over the city, and there was a streamer attached to the balloon, saying Hare Krishna Festival. It was real American ingenuity, flair, and dynamism.

Inspired by Śyāmasundara's lead and taking up a spirit of competition, the other devotees worked at their projects with great enthusiasm. When Prabhupāda called a meeting of the local ISKCON life members and supporters, the turnout was disappointing—only about a dozen. And even those, on hearing the proportions of Prabhupāda's plan, became hesitant. The festival would cost more than one hundred thousand rupees! Although some life members doubted whether the devotees could actually execute such a large production, a handful of stalwarts—Sadajiwatlal, Chandulal Bahl, Kartikeya Mahadevia, Kailash Seksaria, Ramchand Chabria, G. D. Somani, and others—vowed they would do their best to help raise the funds.

Prabhupāda remained actively involved, and he warned his disciples to be wary of cheaters during their business transactions. Every night the devotees would report to him, and he would ask about many details. He wanted the best location, the best work, and the best price. He wanted to know everything: What about the cooking area? Are all the devotees working to their full capacity? Is the mailing list complete? Have the invitations been sent? What about the latrines? What was the cost for the sound system? He scrutinized every detail with sharp, critical intelligence.

Girirāja's fund-raising work was going well. He had donations solicited from businessmen and had printed a souvenir pamphlet. But he was feeling a strain, and he came to Prabhupāda for solace. "Can we use force in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?" he asked.

Prabhupāda frowned. "No. We cannot use force."

"But what if we see one of the workers is lazy on the job and not doing what he is supposed to?"

"No," Prabhupāda replied. "We can never use force."

"Well, what about in making life members?"

"Force we cannot use," Prabhupāda repeated. "But we can trick them." He told a story about a boy who didn't want to do arithmetic; as soon as the teacher wrote one plus one on the board, the boy would balk. So the teacher drew a picture of a cow on the board and asked the boy, "If a man has one cow and then he buys another cow, how many cows will he have?" The boy answered, "Two." Thus the teacher began teaching him arithmetic, even though he was unwilling to learn.

"So people may be averse to serving Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda explained, "but we can trick them and get them to serve without their knowing it. But we can never use force. These people are all businessmen. They are always calculating profit and loss. But they are also pious, and they want to go to Kṛṣṇa. So you have to convince them that by giving this money they will gain so much by coming closer to Kṛṣṇa. And that is the truth. When they are convinced, then they will give."

Prabhupāda had ordered from Jaipur two sets of large white marble Deities (paid for by a donation from R. D. Birla). One set was to be installed in the Bombay temple and the other worshiped at the paṇḍāl and later sent to one of the temples in the West. But the devotees were anxious that the Deities be finished and shipped on time. And there were other sources of anxiety, right up until the very day of the festival. Paṇḍāl construction, prasādam distribution, seating arrangements, sound systems—whether these things would be ready on time and whether there would be enough money remained uncertain. But under Prabhupāda's direction the devotees worked steadily, with firm faith in Kṛṣṇa.

And all turned out successful, with ten thousand people attending the first day and twenty thousand that night. The devotees, including those just arrived from the West, numbered about a hundred, and the large stage easily accommodated them, with ample space for dancing kīrtanas. Onstage, within a gorgeous, golden-domed altar, surrounded by profuse flower arrangements, stood Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's large red vyāsāsana, covered by a canopy, stood at stage center. Also onstage was a display of Prabhupāda's books. The tall and spacious paṇḍāl, built to hold more than thirty thousand, was lined with fluorescent bulbs, and the stage glowed with colorful flashing lights.

The program was kīrtana, prasādam, a lecture, and slides, more kīrtana, and more prasādam. And the Bombayites—devotees at heart, despite their sophistication and Westernization—loved these very things: Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, kīrtana, and prasādam. And that all this was being presented by Westerners made the paṇḍāl especially attractive.

The cooks prepared prasādam at the paṇḍāl site, cooking over a hard coal fire and using big paddles to stir kicharī and halavā in woks eight feet across. Each night the devotees would serve thousands of plates.

Prabhupāda's appearance in the evening was always the high point. He would sit on his vyāsāsana, little Sarasvatī would walk out and garland him, and the crowd would cheer. He would wait for the crowd to quieten, which never happened. So he would just begin speaking, his voice ringing over

the powerful sound system. He titled his first lecture “Modern Civilization Is a Failure, and the Only Hope Is Krishna Consciousness.”

Prabhupāda sat, eyes half closed in concentration, addressing the largest audience that had ever assembled to hear him. His speaking was particularly forceful, as he glorified Kṛṣṇa and criticized the enemies of Kṛṣṇa. He spoke against governments that were not Kṛṣṇa conscious and against gurus who neglected the worship of Kṛṣṇa. He stressed the necessity of teaching Kṛṣṇa's message to the whole world, while his Godbrothers from the Bombay Gaudiya Math sat in the audience, listening respectfully.

“And you are practically seeing that all over the world these Bhagavad-gītā principles—Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord—is being accepted. All these boys and girls who are dancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—four years ago, four years back, they never heard of Kṛṣṇa. Of course, some of them knew Bhagavad-gītā, because Bhagavad-gītā is very widely read. But because Bhagavad-gītā was not properly presented, although for the last hundred or two hundred or more than that years Bhagavad-gītā is widely read all over the world, there was not a single Kṛṣṇa bhakta. But since Bhagavad-gītā is being presented as it is, within four years there are hundreds and thousands of Kṛṣṇa bhaktas. That is our point, that you present the thing as it is, without any adulteration...

“So it is our mission. It is India's culture. People are hankering after this culture, Kṛṣṇa culture. So you should prepare yourself to present Bhagavad-gītā as it is. Then India will conquer all over the world by this Kṛṣṇa culture. Rest assured. But we are hankering after help from others. Our government men go there in America: ‘Please give us wheat. Please give us money. Please give us soldiers.’ Simply begging business. But here is a thing which you can give to them. Simply begging does not glorify your country.”

Girirāja: Prabhupāda was preaching forcefully to the people of Bombay, and every evening the paṇḍāl was packed with at least twenty thousand people. Śrīla Prabhupāda would preach so strongly, emphasizing following religious principles. He knew that these people are Hindus but they are not following these principles. Prabhupāda was speaking so powerfully that I knew that what he was saying would be hard for many of the audience to accept.

“We have something to give to the whole world. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness... Why you neglect this treasure of Vedic knowledge? And the summarized knowledge is Bhagavad-gītā. So if we simply try to understand Bhagavad-gītā as it is, we understand immediately the science of God. And because we are all parts and parcels of God, we are actually hankering after uniting with God. That is our seeking. Ānandamayo 'bhyāsāt. God is ānandamaya [by nature, full of pleasure], and we, being part and parcel of God, or Kṛṣṇa, we are also ānandamaya. But we are seeking ānanda [pleasure] in a different atmosphere, in the material atmosphere. Therefore we are being baffled. The only remedy is that you take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and you will be happy. So it is the duty of every Indian to understand this science.”

Girirāja: At that time I was thinking that if Prabhupāda had wanted to flatter the audience or compromise his philosophy, he could have attracted millions of followers. But because he was preaching so boldly and forcefully without compromise, many of the audience did not like it, because it was a challenge to their sense gratification and to their sentiment.

“This is a science. It is not a dogmatic, bluffing thing. It is a science, and spoken by the Lord Himself, and understood by all the ācāryas. Kṛṣṇa says, ācāryopasanam: we have to understand things through the ācāryas. Ācāryavān puruṣo veda: one who is not following the footsteps of the ācāryas, he cannot understand anything. Kṛṣṇa also says, tad-vijñānārtham. That is said in the Kaṭhopanīṣad: tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evā bhigacchet. Kṛṣṇa says, tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā. So everywhere the same instruction is there, “You approach a person who is coming in disciplic succession—evam paramparā-prāptam—and try to learn Bhagavad-gītā as it is.’ Your life will be sublime. Your life will be successful. That is our mission.”

Girirāja: The fact is that people were wild about Prabhupāda and ISKCON. One night we showed slides of the Ratha-yātrā in San Francisco, and the audience was going wild. In front of ten thousand people Prabhupāda announced that we will hold Jagannātha Ratha-yātrā in Bombay, and everyone started to cheer and applaud.

Day after day, the paṇḍāl festival was a success. Bombay's most important citizens came and were impressed. White-shirted businessmen and their well-groomed wives joined in the chanting. For hundreds of thousands of Bombay citizens, coming to the Cross Maidan to attend an evening paṇḍāl program was easy enough. Some were intent on listening to the lecture and inquiring deeply into devotional service, others came mostly to see the Deity, take prasādam, or appreciate the kīrtana. In any case, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees were a refreshing addition to the life of the city. It was the biggest public event in Bombay.

One evening Prabhupāda conducted a Vedic marriage ceremony and an initiation before thousands of people. The marriage was arranged between Vegavān who was Swedish, and Padmavatī dāsī, who was Australian. They completely enchanted the whole audience—she with her ornate red sārī and Indian jewelry, including a nose ring, and he with his nice white dhotī and kurtā and clean-shaven head. Six brahmācārīs were initiated at that time also.

Girirāja: The audience was impressed. First of all they were amazed just to see foreign devotees, foreign sādhus. Then, on top of that, to see them being initiated, and even more than that, being married in front of ten thousand people—it was overwhelming. So during the ceremony, as Śrīla Prabhupāda made the boy and girl husband and wife, he mentioned that she was from Australia and he was from Sweden. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “This is the real United Nations,” and everyone burst into applause. It was the most glamorous, wonderful program.

The final night of the festival, the devotees carried the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in a palanquin to the seaside. Prabhupāda spoke and held kīrtana before a crowd of twenty-five thousand.

The next day, the Indian Express reported, “FITTING FINALE TO HARE KRISHNA FESTIVAL.”

It was a grand, fitting finale to the 11-day Hare Krishna festival which attracted thousands of devotees at Cross Maidan in South Bombay.

The decorated murtis of Radha and Krishna were taken in procession on a regal ratha from the venue through Dirgaum Road to Chaoupatty in the evening.

Dozens of nama-sankirtana mandalas from all over the city spearheaded the procession with loud and ecstatic chanting of the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, followed by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhu pada in an elegant horse-drawn coach chanting. Crowds chanted Hare Krishna on the road sides as the ratha was pulled by devotees along the route.

At Chaoupatty the four-foot-tall Deities, splendidly dressed and decorated with jewels and garlands, were displayed on Their magnificent "simhasana" (throne) donated to the Hare Krishna movement by Madhav Baug and Mumba devi temples.

During the celebrations Prabhupāda spoke from the Gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam daily, morning and evening. More than thirty of his foreign disciples conducted kirtana, aratika, and film shows in the specially erected pandals.

Prabhupāda will deliver his final public message to the citizens before leaving in a few weeks on a preaching tour of the major cities of Russia.

Bombayites would not soon forget the Hare Kṛṣṇa festival, and a letter from Prabhupāda to the ISKCON life members pledged that it had been only the beginning.

By the Grace of Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha and Krishna our recent festival in Cross Maidan Exhibition Ground has been counted a grand success, and quite noticeably the spirit of bhakti has been actively revived in Bombay. My blessings go especially to all of you who have joined with us in service.

As you may know, my plan is to establish in this most auspicious city a unique International Krishna Conscious Training Centre, where hundreds of persons from abroad may be educated in the Vedic way of life, while at the same time Indian boys and girls may be trained up for prachar (preaching) work in foreign countries. We will construct classrooms, workrooms, dormitories, kitchen for large-scale public prasad distribution, a lecture hall, library, and a beautiful temple for the glorification of Radha and Krishna.

We are on the threshold of bringing this important project to fruition, and we are very excited to inform you the progress made in this respect.

You will agree with me that your active participation and your direct involvement in this is most essential, and hence I appeal to you to spare your valuable time for Krishna and make it a point, inspite of your extremely busy life, to extend your unstinted co-operation. It is proposed to hold a meeting on Monday, the 25th April 1971, at 6:30 p.m., "Akash Ganga," 7th floor, 89 Bhulabhai Desai Road, Bombay-26, to discuss and to finalise plans to channel our united energies to achieve the goal. It will also be a great opportunity for like-minded Krishna devotees to meet, to have darshan of the deities, and to exchange views and suggestions to make rapid progress in spiritual life.

I very much want to meet you again, so kindly make it a “must” to attend our meeting; there is a lot of ground to be covered to spread Krishna Consciousness to millions and millions of our slumbering brothers and sisters!

That so many were accepting ISKCON and the saṅkīrtana movement as bona fide testified to the purity of Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings. His teachings were not sectarian; they were meant for everyone all over the world. He was teaching love of Kṛṣṇa, the universal principle for all humanity. In his lectures at the paṇḍāl he had lamented that although India was known as the land of religion, where God consciousness had traditionally permeated society, India's leaders were becoming atheists and communists. Whether Indians, polluted by the madness for sense gratification and confused by a hodgepodge of pseudoreligious teachings, could still recognize and adopt the real thing remained to be seen. But at least in Bombay, the paṇḍāl program had had a great effect—of that Prabhupāda felt satisfied.

The program had been the same program he had introduced everywhere: chanting, dancing, taking prasādam, worshiping the Deity, hearing about Kṛṣṇa. It was Lord Caitanya's program, adapted slightly according to the particular circumstances—but Lord Caitanya's program nonetheless. This saṅkīrtana was the only possible remedy for the disease of modern society. Yet people were reluctant to take the remedy. Prabhupāda, therefore, had “labeled the bottle.” The medicine was unchanged, but he had labeled it attractively: a gala evening of entertainment, music, and refreshments, featuring the youth of America and Europe transformed into Vaiṣṇavas.

The labeling was simple, nondeceptive; everyone in Bombay knew well that the Hare Kṛṣṇa paṇḍāl festival was a product of their own Vedic heritage. They were fully aware that the Hare Kṛṣṇa leader was a great ācārya in the ancient tradition. But it had come to them in such a spectacular and attractive way that they had become caught up in it.

Madhudviṣa: No one really thought Prabhupāda was leaving India. In India Prabhupāda was the cutting edge of the whole movement. He was the force. Things were moving because of Prabhupāda. In the Western world Prabhupāda would give the idea, and the devotees would expand on it; Prabhupāda was the overseer, but he didn't have such an integral, active part in the West. But in India Prabhupāda was right in the thick of it. He was checking the accounts. He was so much involved in the Indian scene that 'ṣi Kumāra, the Bombay treasurer, would have to go to Prabhupāda every other day and show him the accounts. He was very much involved in everything. The whole movement in India depended on Prabhupāda. Because of this, no one thought that Prabhupāda would really leave us.

SPL 34: Jet-Age Parivrājākācārya

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Jet-Age Parivrājākācārya

= May 1971

Śrīla Prabhupāda prepared for extensive world travel. Although his itinerary was indefinite, his general plan was to travel widely for a few months, then tour the U.S., visit London, and then return to India. He had sent disciples to Australia and Malaysia, and he wanted to visit them. He also wanted to go to Moscow and was awaiting a letter of permission from the Soviet government. As he had spread his movement in America, visiting major cities and preaching and then stationing a few faithful disciples there to carry on, he now expanded his field to include the whole world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's traveling was in the mood of Nārada Muni, the eternally wandering devotee. In the First Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śrīla Prabhupāda had translated Nārada Muni's words:

I travelled all over the earth fully satisfied and without being proud or envious... I do travel everywhere, by the Grace of the Almighty Vishnu either in the transcendental world or in the three divisions of the material world without any restriction because I am fixed up unbroken in the devotional service of the Lord. I do travel as abovementioned by constantly singing the glories of the Lord in transcendental message by vibrating this instrument of Vina charged with transcendental sound and given to me by Lord Krishna.

And in his Bhāgavatam purports, Śrīla Prabhupāda had explained,

It is the duty of a mendicant to have experience of all varieties of God's creation as Paribrajakacharya or travelling alone through all forests, hills, towns, villages etc. to gain faith in God and strength of mind as well as to enlighten the inhabitants of the message of God. A Sannyāsī is duty bound to take all these risks without any fear and the most typical Sannyāsī of the present age is Lord Chaitanya Who travelled in the same manner through the central India jungles enlightening even the tigers, bears, snakes, deers, elephants and many other jungle animals.

In the age of Kali, Prabhupāda had explained, sannyāsa is especially difficult. If, however, one did take sannyāsa,

One who may take the vow of renunciation of family life may not imitate the Paribrajakacharyas like Nārada or Lord Chaitanya but may sit down at some holy place and devote the whole time and energy in hearing and repeatedly chanting the holy scriptures left by the great Acharyas like the six Gosvamins of Vrindaban.

Yet Prabhupāda was traveling as a mendicant missionary, parivrājakācārya. Having already attained the advanced stage wherein the pure devotee resides in Vṛndāvana and chants Hare Kṛṣṇa incessantly, he was now traveling for the good of the whole world. He, like Nārada, was traveling to all parts of the world. As a news writer in India had appropriately titled him, he was "a jet-age parivrājakācārya."

A few brahmacārīs, each only recently initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda, had been preaching alone on the tropical peninsula of Malaysia for several months. With nearly a million Indians in Malaysia, many of them wealthy and influential, the brahmacārīs were meeting with success. During one program at a Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur, a South Indian doctor and his lawyer wife expressed their appreciation of the devotees and offered to donate a house and some land to ISKCON. When

the devotees visited the property and found that the offer was serious, they informed Prabhupāda, who decided to visit.

Prabhupāda, accompanied by his disciple Vegavān, flew from Bombay to Kuala Lumpur. Since he planned to go next to Sydney and install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in the new temple there, he carried the Deities with him, the same Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa who had presided at the Bombay paṇḍāl. Lord Kṛṣṇa rode in a wooden box in the plane's luggage compartment, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, wrapped in cloth, rested on Vegavān's lap. Within a brief time after Prabhupāda's arrival at Kuala Lumpur, he was lecturing before a large audience at his host's home.

I'm very glad to inform you that we have reached Malaysia very shortly, that on my arrival there was a nice meeting, and then we have come outside the city. Yesterday I was very busy all day.

For two days Prabhupāda stayed in the home of a wealthy Sindhi merchant of Kuala Lumpur. The house was large and luxurious, with thick carpets and large mirrors. But when Prabhupāda learned that his hosts were meat-eaters, he refused to eat anything except fruit and milk, even though his disciples offered to cook for him. His disciples, having traveled throughout Malaysia, considered eating at the homes of meat-eaters permissible, as long as the devotees could prepare their prasādam in pots not used for cooking meat. But Prabhupāda's standard was higher.

One room in the house held a large collection of marble Deities, about fifty sets of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in rows. It appeared to be more of a collector's display than worship, however, and Prabhupāda was unimpressed.

Prabhupāda lectured at the Kuala Lumpur town hall and the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple, mostly to Indians. He explained that people could be united only on the spiritual platform. "Look at the United Nations," he said. "They are adding more and more flags. And there are only more and more wars. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will be the real United Nations." Prabhupāda had brought with him slides of ISKCON's activities, and he had one of his disciples narrate a slide show, coaching him on what to say. When a slide appeared of Ratha-yātrā in London's Trafalgar Square, Prabhupāda prompted the devotee, "Now it's no more Lord Nelson. Now it's Lord Jagannātha."

When Prabhupāda met the couple offering the land, he discovered that the agreement had certain important conditions. The doctor and his wife said that they would give ISKCON a large piece of land near the main highway and that their own construction company would build the temple. Within two years, however, if the company hadn't completed the building, the doctor and his wife would reclaim the property. Always eager to consider any serious donation of land, Prabhupāda accepted the conditional offer. But he knew that such offers were usually too conditional. Already the doctor and his wife had hinted of "Indian brāhmaṇas" running the temple and of ISKCON's having only a side altar.

One evening as Prabhupāda talked with the doctor, a gynecologist, the talk turned to birth control. Prabhupāda explained its sinfulness, and he gave an example. If someone poisoned the air in the room he and the doctor were sitting in, then they would have to leave the room or die. Similarly, Prabhupāda explained, contraception meant to poison the womb, denying a soul its rightful shelter.

Like Prabhupāda's previous host, the doctor ate meat, although the devotees had been pushing him to give it up. Prabhupāda was gentle. "Try to stop eating meat," he urged. It was Ekādaśī, and Prabhupāda decided to fast from all food, again showing extreme reluctance to eat in the home of a meat-eater.

* * *

Sydney

May 9, 1971

The Sydney devotees weren't ready for Prabhupāda. An early telegram had informed them he was coming, but a later telegram had said, "Prabhupāda not coming now." A third telegram had come, announcing that Bali-mardana, the Australian G.B.C. secretary, was coming. When a fourth telegram had stated only "Arriving" and the date and flight number, the devotees had presumed this referred to Bali-mardana, not to Prabhupāda. The devotees had taken a small garland and had gone to meet the plane, and when the doors to the customs area opened and Prabhupāda himself walked out, they were flabbergasted.

A white attache case in his left hand, a cane in his right, a lightweight cādar around his shoulders, Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the airport. Reporters, on hand to interview Bali-mardana, came eagerly forward, one of them inquiring why Prabhupāda had come to Australia.

Replying softly, Prabhupāda said he traveled everywhere, just as a salesman travels everywhere. A salesman looks for customers wherever he can find them, and Prabhupāda was traveling, searching for anyone intelligent enough to accept his message. "There is no difference in coming to Australia," he said. "The governments have made a demarcation— 'This is Australia'—but we see everywhere as the land of Kṛṣṇa."

One of the devotees hurried to phone the temple—Prabhupāda was coming!

Like Prabhupāda's original temple at 26 Second Avenue in New York, the Sydney temple was a one-room storefront on a main business thoroughfare. On the storefront's plate glass window, one of the devotees had painted a picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda entered the room and found it bare, except for a simple wooden altar with three-inch Jagannātha deities, and a big cloth-covered vyāsāsana. An old rug hid the floor. The blue haze hanging in the air was smoke from the downstairs kitchen, where a devotee was frantically burning cumin seeds to spice Prabhupāda's lunch.

Prabhupāda remained grave as he walked deliberately to the rear door and looked outside. But when he saw garbage and boards stacked high against the building, his gravity turned to sternness. "What is all this?" he asked. Someone tried an explanation. Unsatisfactory. A devotee brought a glass of milk. "Too hot," Prabhupāda said, and the devotee took it away.

Prabhupāda sat on the large vyāsāsana. He looked around the room at each face. None of the fifteen or so devotees had ever seen him before, and only a handful had been initiated (by mail). They were untrained. The carpet was dirty, he said; it should be replaced. And why were there no flowers on the altar? He had brought Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa Deities, but before the devotees could begin Their worship, everything must be very clean. The devotees would have to become brāhmaṇas before they could worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

These devotees, Prabhupāda saw, knew little of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The devotees who had come to Australia originally, Upendra and Bali- mardana, had opened the center and left, returning but rarely. Thus an entire temple of inexperienced devotees had been virtually left on its own. Since none of the Sydney devotees could lecture well, the daily classes had consisted of readings from Prabhupāda's abridged Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, the only book they had. Yet their firm faith in Prabhupāda compensated for their lack of training. They accepted him as a pure devotee directly in touch with God, and they accepted his books as truth and Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But many practical things they didn't know, such as how to cook, lecture, and worship the Deities. They knew Prabhupāda wanted them to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa publicly and distribute Back to Godhead magazines to the people of Sydney, and this they did daily. Despite frequent arrests, they continued with their saṅkīrtana. Sincerity they had. They only lacked training.

A devotee brought Prabhupāda his lunch, poorly cooked—the capātis half burned, half raw, the vegetables wrongly spiced. Prabhupāda rebuked the cook, "If you didn't know how to cook, why didn't you tell me? I can show you." And he went into the kitchen. One of the cooks had tried to make kacaurīs and had failed. Although she knew that the dough had to be rolled thin, the filling put in just right, and then the edges folded over precisely, neither she nor any of the other devotees had been able to do it. Prabhupāda, using the same dough and filling, demonstrated the art and made perfect kacaurīs.

The devotees explained their difficulty in making capātis. There was no flame on their electric stove. The capātis always came out dry or raw or burned and never puffed up. The excuse only annoyed Prabhupāda, however, who showed exactly how to make capātis that puffed up every time—even on an electric burner. Then he taught the cooks a simple vegetable dish, advising as he cooked. After he left the kitchen, the devotees tried the capātis again. They wouldn't puff. It seemed a magical art only Prabhupāda knew.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had his reasons for bringing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to Australia—some of them apparent, others so deep that only he and Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa could understand them. Of course, he was always expanding his movement, of which Deity worship was an important part. So that was one reason for bringing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to Australia: to strengthen the devotees and establish more solidly his movement there.

And Prabhupāda loved these Deities. They had presided over the Bombay paṇḍāl, and when They hadn't been onstage he had kept Them in his room, where he could look at Them during the day. He had brought Them from Bombay to Malaysia to Sydney, and now he proposed to install Them in this fledgling ISKCON center. But the infinite purity of his heart and the depth of his determination to risk anything for Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are unfathomable. Śrīla Prabhupāda's activities are most grave, and their deeper meaning eludes an observer. Of Lord

Caitanya, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja wrote, "I do not know the deep meaning of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's activities. I am just trying to describe them externally."

When Prabhupāda came to the temple to perform the initiation ceremony and Deity installation, the devotees weren't ready. Only one small vase of flowers decorated the almost bare altar, and the devotees had not made garlands for the Deities. Prabhupāda was displeased. The small temple was packed, however, and guests and devotees crowded the open doorway and peered through the front window. TV crews filmed the action under hot lamps.

While devotees hurriedly strung garlands for the Deities, Prabhupāda performed the initiation ceremony. There were fifteen initiates in all. To some devotees he gave first initiation, to some second initiation, and to others both first and second. Then he lovingly bathed the forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and performed the fire sacrifice. While dressing the Deities, he remarked that Their clothes had been poorly made and that the devotees should make new ones immediately. He named the Deities Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha.

Vaibhavī: He initiated everyone in the temple, anyone who was there— even one boy who had just joined that week and had only come across Kṛṣṇa consciousness the week before, and people who weren't living in the temple, just anyone who was there and somehow serving. He wanted Kṛṣṇa consciousness to be established in Australia, so he just initiated everybody. He gave first and second initiations at the same time, because, having installed the Deities, there had to be some brāhmaṇas.

But we didn't know anything. We weren't even ready. The altar wasn't finished. Prabhupāda explained to me that we had to string flowers for a garland—the Deity was supposed to wear one. I was running up and down the street trying to find some flowers and get some thread and make a garland.

Same with the sacred thread There were no sacred threads. Prabhupāda gave the men a sacred thread at brāhmaṇa initiation, but no one really knew what it was. So I had to run and buy some string. And while Prabhupāda was initiating people, I was sitting there in the arena making sacred threads, copying the one that Bali-mardana had taken off himself.

I made five of them, and then I was next. After the sacrifice, and after I came out of Prabhupāda's room, where he'd given me the Gāyatrī mantra, the other devotees said, "You're a brāhmaṇa now. So you have to have a sacred thread, too." They told me to make one for myself which I didn't, because someone told me later a woman wasn't supposed to wear one. We just didn't know much.

At Sydney Grammar School, an elite school for boys, Prabhupāda led his disciples and a group of students in a kīrtana procession through the schoolyard. About two hundred boys and several teachers took part, some children frolicking and laughing, some singing the mantra, some soberly following the procession, as the teachers smiled and watched. The procession ended in a large room with a row of chairs in the front. Prabhupāda sat in the headmaster's elaborately carved thronelike seat in the center and began playing karatālas, continuing the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Seeing only a few students responding, he stopped and looked around at the children sitting before him.

"So you are all beautiful boys. Why you do not join us in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa? Is it very difficult? Will you not try to chant? Hare. Say Ha-re."

A few children: "Hare."

Prabhupāda: "All of you chant, Hare."

The children, weakly: "Hare." Some giggled.

Prabhupāda led them through the mantra, one word at a time. Still some children were reticent.

Prabhupāda: "There are only three words: Hare, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma. Is it very difficult? Chant again—Hare."

Children: "Hare."

Teasing and prodding, Prabhupāda coaxed them. "Oh, you cannot chant? You are all dumb?" The children broke into laughter. "How is that? Three words you cannot chant? Oh, that is very astonishing. Chant! Hare!"

"Hare."

"Kṛṣṇa!"

"Kṛṣṇa!"

Prabhupāda began rhythmically ringing his karatālas, the children following him as he sang: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

After a short time Prabhupāda brought the kīrtana to a close. Sitting in the beautiful ornate chair, he smiled at the children. "Three words: Hare, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma. Do you know what is God? Can any of you stand up and tell me what is God?"

There was silence, then whispering. Finally, one twelve-year-old boy stood. His schoolmates applauded and laughed.

"Oh, thank you," Prabhupāda said. "Come here."

The boy approached.

"Do you know what is God?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Yes," the boy replied. "God is self-realization, and God is found in the unconscious mind."

"Thank you."

Again the children applauded.

"No, wait. Don't go away," Prabhupāda said. "Now you must explain what you mean. What is self-realization?"

Boy: "It is tapping the powers of the unconscious mind and seeing yourself..."

Prabhupāda: "Do you think the mind is unconscious?"

Boy: "The mind is unconscious."

Prabhupāda: "To understand the unconscious, you have to find out what is consciousness."

Boy: "I'm not talking about consciousness—the unconsciousness."

Prabhupāda: "Unless you know consciousness, how can you describe unconsciousness?"

Boy: "The unconsciousness. The id."

Prabhupāda: "Unconsciousness is the negative side of consciousness. So you should explain what is consciousness. Then we can understand unconsciousness."

Boy: "Consciousness?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes. Try to understand what is consciousness. Then you will understand what is unconsciousness. Consciousness is spread all over the body. Suppose I pinch any part of your body. You feel some pain. That is consciousness. This feeling of pain and pleasure is consciousness. But that consciousness is individual. I cannot feel the pains and pleasures of your body, neither you can feel the pains and pleasures of my body. Therefore, your consciousness is individual and my consciousness is individual. But there is another consciousness, who can feel the pains and pleasures of your body and who can feel the pains and pleasures of my body. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gītā.

"You have heard the name of Bhagavad-gītā? You? Any of you?"

Another boy: "Yes."

Prabhupāda: "Who says yes? Please come here. Thank you. Very good. At least one of you knows what is Bhagavad-gītā. In the Bhagavad-gītā it is stated that..." And Śrīla Prabhupāda proceeded to explain the difference between the material body and the soul and between the individual souls and the Supreme Soul, Kṛṣṇa.

"You are individual knower of your body. I am knower individually of my body. So everyone is knower of his own body. But there is another person, who says, 'I know everything of everyone's body.' Just like I know something of my body, or I know something of this world. Similarly, there

is another ātmā (soul), supreme ātmā, who knows everything of this universe. He is sometimes called God or the Paramātmā or Kṛṣṇa, whatever, according to different language."

After describing the soul's intimate relationship as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa and the soul's suffering caused by forgetting that relationship, Prabhupāda concluded his lecture.

"These teachings should be introduced in every school and college so that from the very beginning children understand what is God, how great He is, how we are related with God, and how we have to live.

"So our movement, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is teaching that thing. Don't think that it is a sectarian religion. We are making people God conscious. It doesn't matter to what religion you may belong. If by following the principles of religion one becomes advanced in God consciousness, that is first-class religion. That is our motto, and we are preaching all over the world.

"Therefore, I request your teachers here to make the students from the beginning God conscious. Then their future life will be very peaceful, prosperous, and hopeful. Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda also agreed to speak at Wayside Chapel, a center in downtown Sydney ministering to drug addicts and prostitutes. A Wayside sponsor met Prabhupāda at the temple and accompanied him to the Chapel. The sponsor, a long-haired young man in hippie dress, boasted of how Wayside Chapel helped drug addicts. Prabhupāda, however, took it that he was saying the Chapel supplied drugs to the addicts.

At Wayside Chapel a skeptic in the audience challenged Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda had explained that the chanting of the holy names of God was the only way to actually help people, but the cynic challenged, "What good actually is this chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa?"

"It saves you from death!" Prabhupāda answered forcibly.

May 12, 1971

In his quarters in Sydney, Prabhupāda wrote the Preface to the upcoming edition of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. The Macmillan Company had now agreed to print the unabridged manuscript. The contract was signed, the book was being readied for printing; only the Preface remained to be written.

Prabhupāda wrote in his Preface that although he was known for starting the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in America, actually "the original father of this movement is Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself." Giving all credit for his own achievements to his spiritual master, Prabhupāda said that the only qualification he himself had was that he had tried to present Bhagavad-gītā as it is, without adulteration.

Instead of satisfying his own personal material senses, he [a person] has to satisfy the senses of the Lord. That is the highest perfection of life. The Lord wants this, and He demands it. One has to understand this central point of Bhagavad-gītā. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is teaching the whole world this central point, and because we are not polluting the theme of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, anyone seriously interested in deriving benefit by studying the Bhagavad-gītā must take help from the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for practical understanding of Bhagavad-gītā under the direct guidance of the Lord. We hope, therefore, that people will derive the greatest benefit by studying Bhagavad-gītā As It Is as we have presented it here, and if even one man becomes a pure devotee of the Lord we shall consider our attempt a success.

As Prabhupāda explained in his Preface, he was publishing the full Gītā manuscript “to establish the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement more soundly and progressively.” He would do this by presenting transcendental literature like Bhagavad-gītā. But he would also have to go, as Lord Caitanya has said, “to every town and village”—either personally or through his agents, his disciples. And wherever he went, he would preach Bhagavad-gītā to whoever would listen.

Tomorrow Prabhupāda would leave Australia for a big paṇḍāl festival in Calcutta, then on to Moscow, Paris, Los Angeles...

Lord Kṛṣṇa states in Bhagavad-gītā that no servant is more dear to Him than one who teaches Bhagavad-gītā to the devotees. And Prabhupāda, in all his activities—whether writing a Preface, lecturing to the prostitutes and drug addicts, teaching a disciple to cook capātis without burning them, or planning grand projects yet to come—was always teaching Bhagavad-gītā and therefore was always the dearest servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda stood before the Deities of Rādhā-Gopīnātha with folded hands. After less than a week in Sydney, he was leaving. He knew that the devotees here were not up to the standard required for worshiping Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. And he knew he was taking a risk, entrusting Their worship to neophyte disciples. Yet as an empowered ācārya and as the representative of Lord Caitanya, he had to implant Kṛṣṇa consciousness anywhere it might take root. The world was in desperate need. If his disciples followed the process he had given them—chanting, hearing, observing regulative principles—he knew they would quickly become purified.

He had given an analogy: Although in material life a man must first become a highly qualified lawyer before sitting on the judge's bench, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness a sincere devotee is first allowed to “sit on the bench,” to become a brāhmaṇa, and later, by the mercy of the holy name and the spiritual master, he becomes qualified. The devotees in Sydney, however, were particularly immature, and Prabhupāda made an extraordinary request of Rādhā-Gopīnātha: “Now I am leaving You in the hands of the mlecchas. I cannot take the responsibility. You please guide these boys and girls and give them the intelligence to worship You very nicely.”

* * *

Calcutta

May 13, 1971

Prabhupāda arrived just in time for the ten-day Calcutta paṇḍāl festival. On his orders, Girirāja and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had come to organize the festival, just as they had the one in Bombay. Prabhupāda had written to Jayapataṅka Swami, president of ISKCON Calcutta,

In the San Kirtan festival pandel if a very big kitchen arrangement can be made, then we shall distribute prasadam daily. Try to make this arrangement. Puri, halevah, kitrie—whatever can be arranged as much as possible. Tamal Krishna and Giriraj have all the ideas.

Attendance surpassed that of the Bombay paṇḍāl, with twenty to thirty thousand people attending daily, including ministers of Parliament and other distinguished speakers. It was one of the biggest religious functions Calcutta had ever seen; the whole city became aware of the strength of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

In the early afternoon the devotees would begin selling Prabhupāda's books from a booth, performing kīrtana onstage, and distributing prasādam to the masses. Around 6:30 the evening program would begin with a long, intense kīrtana, which would increase in its fervor as Prabhupāda arrived for the evening āraṭi before the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda would lecture, sometimes in Bengali and sometimes in English. Afterward the devotees would show slides of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement around the world, and Prabhupāda would answer questions from the audience. After the program, people would push forward to receive a morsel of the prasādam that had been offered to the Deity.

Naxalite terrorists threatened Prabhupāda's life. These young Communist terrorists, who had been active in Calcutta during Prabhupāda's visit of 1970, had never disturbed him until now. Their tactic was to approach prominent businessmen in their homes or on the street and coerce them into cooperation with Naxalite political objectives. If a businessman refused, the Naxalites would burn his home or place of business or even assassinate him. The Naxalites, who were eager for all of Bengal to turn from their religious traditions and embrace Communism, saw Prabhupāda rekindling the religious spirit in Calcutta. Prabhupāda's tremendous crowd-gathering paṇḍāl, they concluded, was undermining the principles of Communism.

"Fly or Die," read the note Prabhupāda received. He informed the police, who regretted their inability to help. The whole of Calcutta, they said, was in terror of the Naxalites. Prabhupāda, however, refused to be intimidated; he would not fly. Even if they were to attack him, he said, what better way for a Vaiṣṇava to leave his body than while preaching the glories of the Lord?

The next night as Prabhupāda came before the crowd to speak, he noticed a group of rowdy young men, Naxalites, near the stage. They were protesting the preferential seating of certain dignitaries onstage. When one young radical shouted that the radicals themselves wanted to dance onstage, the devotees invited them to join in a kīrtana. The Naxalites backed down, but continued shouting and disrupting the meeting. They began banging the seats of the wooden folding chairs, calling out Naxalite slogans, and threatening to burn the place down. Others in the audience began talking nervously among themselves, increasing the commotion. In a vain attempt to bring order, some of the devotees threatened the dissenters. Pushing and scuffling broke out in the audience.

"Cintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vṛkṣa-/ lakṣāvṛteṣu surabhīr abhipālayantam..." Prabhupāda's voice rang over the powerful loudspeaker system. Appearing uninterested in the crowd, depending only on Kṛṣṇa, he began singing prayers from *Brahma-saṁhitā*, and within minutes everyone quieted. Those who wanted to leave left, and those who wanted to stay sat down. The crowd subdued, Prabhupāda lectured.

Several more "fly or die" notes came, and the Naxalites returned the next night, threatening again to burn the paṇḍāl. "Call them," Prabhupāda said. "I will meet with them." The devotees thought it unsafe, but Prabhupāda insisted. In a small room behind the paṇḍāl, Prabhupāda spoke with the hostile youths. They were angry and disrespectful at first, but as Prabhupāda explained to them the Vedic concept of communism—with Kṛṣṇa at the center—he caught their interest. They agreed to allow Prabhupāda's meetings to continue without any further disruptions.

Acyutānanda Swami: The last night of the ten-day paṇḍāl program was a grand finale, with over forty thousand people attending. I had just stepped out to get sugarcane juice. The paṇḍāl was completely packed when I left, but when I got outside, I saw rivers of people flowing through the four main gates into the paṇḍāl tent. I thought this must be Kṛṣṇa's mystic power, because the tent was already packed and still thousands of people were entering it. I thought that Kṛṣṇa must be unlimitedly expanding the dimensions of space.

The climax of the evening was a big procession, beginning at the paṇḍāl and going up Park Street to the ISKCON temple on Albert Road. The Deities of Rādhā-Govinda rode on a palanquin to the temple, where They were placed on the altar. After an āratī in the temple, the remaining crowd dispersed.

Acyutānanda Swami was standing next to Prabhupāda that night in the Calcutta temple. "Prabhupāda," he said, "someone put Kṛṣṇa's flute in backward." Prabhupāda looked. It was backward. "Kṛṣṇa is all-powerful" he said, turning to Acyutānanda Swami. "He can play from the back end also."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was still striving for a plot of land in Māyāpur. Having abandoned the idea that his Godbrothers in Māyāpur might help, he had been working through Bengali friends in negotiating with Muslim farmers in Māyāpur. On returning from Australia, Prabhupāda had sent Tamāla Kṛṣṇa to Māyāpur with orders not to come back until he had purchased land. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa's mission was successful, and after six days he returned to Prabhupāda in Calcutta, having purchased nine bighas, three acres, in Māyāpur.

Conceiving the value of Māyāpur was difficult for the devotees, however. One devotee journeyed from Calcutta to see the new ISKCON property and on returning asked Prabhupāda, "What are we going to do there? It's just a big empty field. Nothing is there."

"Because there are no factories and cars," Prabhupāda replied, "therefore you think there is nothing to do. But we are going to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in Māyāpur. We will build a big temple there, and all the devotees in the world can go out and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in the place of Lord Caitanya's birth." On May 28 Prabhupāda wrote,

You will be glad to learn that we have purchased about five acres of land in Mayapur, the birthsite of Lord Chaitanya, and we have proposed to hold a nice festival there from Janmastami day for two weeks. At that time the foundation stone will be set down. I wish that all our leading disciples come to India at that time. There are 50 branches, so at least one from each branch should attend the function.

* * *

June 1971

For months Prabhupāda had been planning to visit Moscow. Aside from his desire to preach to the Russian people, he had a specific meeting in mind with a Russian Indology Professor, G. G. Kotovsky. Professor Kotovsky headed the department of Indian and South Asian studies at Moscow's U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, and Prabhupāda had been corresponding with him for a year.

Kṛṣṇa dāsa in West Germany, with the help of a Dr. Bernhardt of the University of Hamburg, had obtained the names of other Russian scholars of Indology. A letter to Kṛṣṇa dāsa in December of 1970 had revealed Prabhupāda's plans for preaching in Russia.

I am very encouraged to see your enthusiasm for preaching this message to the Russian people, and your idea to send letters with the help of Dr. Bernhardt is very good. He is a big scholar and he also appreciates our movement. So if you arrange a tour of Russia for me, I am prepared to accept. Let us see what Krishna desires... If we can go to Russia with our World Sankirtan Party, I am certain that it will be very much appreciated and people will see the real peace movement is chanting process—chanting the Holy Names Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. So try for it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had coached Kṛṣṇa dāsa on how to best cultivate the Russian Indologists.

You can ask them some questions like: What is the ultimate goal of life? What is your ideal ultimate goal of life? What is the difference between animal and human life? Why is religion accepted by all kinds of civilized societies? What is your conception of the original creation? In this way questions may be put to find out what is their standing. We do not grudge an atheist provided he has got some philosophical standing. In this way try to elicit some answers from the Professors. If you can finally establish one Moscow center, it will be a great credit to you. So far studying Russian language, it is not necessary, but if you do so it is all right. I want very much a center in Russia, so for the time being I shall desire that Moscow Center.

In March 1971, Professor G. G. Kotovsky had replied to Kṛṣṇa dāsa's letter.

I thank you for your information about Swami Bhaktivedanta's lecturing tour. If he would come to Moscow, the Soviet scholars doing research in ancient Indian culture would be very happy to meet him in the Institute of Oriental Studies, U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. I would be thankful to you for your information on the dates of Swami Bhaktivedanta's arrival and stay in the U.S.S.R.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had personally replied to Professor Kotovsky.

... it was understood that you and your university are interested in hearing about Krishna culture and philosophy. This ancient Krishna culture and philosophy is the oldest in the world or in the universe. At least from a historical point of view it is not less than 5,000 years old.

Perhaps you may know that I have started this cultural movement since 1966 and it is already spreading all over the world. Krishna culture is so popular in India that even the government attracts many foreigners by Air India time table to visit Vrindavan, the land of Krishna culture. Enclosed please find one page from the latest Air India time table (April 1971) wherein the Krishna culture is depicted for general attraction.

My life is dedicated to spreading this Krishna culture all over the world. I think if you give me a chance to speak about the great Krishna culture and philosophy in your country, you will very much appreciate this simple programme with great profit. This culture is so well planned that it would be acceptable by any thoughtful man throughout the whole world.

Having preached a year in the Eastern Hemisphere, Prabhupāda was eager to return to the West, and he planned to fly to Moscow and on to Europe. For Prabhupāda and his traveling companions, Śyāmasundara and Aravinda, getting tourist visas for Russia was simple. They would take a five-day, government-controlled tour, with every activity planned by the Soviet Tourist Bureau and everything paid for in advance.

Captain Lal, the pilot of the flight to Moscow, considered Prabhupāda an important passenger and came back to visit him during the flight. They spoke of Prabhupāda's movement, his chances for lecturing in Moscow, and of Bombay, where Prabhupāda was trying to purchase land. Captain Lal invited Prabhupāda to the cockpit, and Prabhupāda came and sat behind the captain, asking technical questions about the equipment and the flight. Prabhupāda and Captain Lal agreed to meet again in Moscow.

Prabhupāda, his secretary, and his servant cleared Soviet customs and immigration quickly and smoothly, and a government tourist guide escorted them by limousine to the Hotel National. The hotel, near Red Square, Lenin's Tomb, and the Kremlin, was expensive but plain. Prabhupāda found his room dingy and cramped, with barely space for a bed and two chairs. The room for Śyāmasundara and Aravinda was far away, and Prabhupāda decided that Aravinda should share the room with him instead, crowding Prabhupāda's room all the more.

Aravinda told the hotel manager that they would not eat the hotel fare, but would have to cook their own meals. The manager refused at first, but finally allowed them use of the maid's kitchen.

That problem solved, the next was getting food. Prabhupāda sent Śyāmasundara out. Across the street, Śyāmasundara found a milk and yogurt store, but he returned to Prabhupāda's room without any fruit, vegetables, or rice. Prabhupāda sent him out again, and this time Śyāmasundara was gone practically all day, returning with only a couple of cabbages. Prabhupāda sent him out the next day for rice. When Śyāmasundara returned with rice after several hours, Prabhupāda saw that it was a

poor North Korean variety, very hard. Prabhupāda asked for fruit, but Śyāmasundara had to hike for miles through the city to find anything fresh—a few red cherries.

Prabhupāda remained peaceful and regulated, keeping to his daily schedule. He would rise early and translate, and in the cool of early morning he would go out for a walk through the all-but-deserted streets. Prabhupāda, wearing a saffron cādar, strode quickly, Śyāmasundara sometimes running ahead to photograph him.

As they would pass Lenin's Mausoleum a queue would already be forming. "Just see," Prabhupāda commented one morning, "that is their God. The people don't understand the difference between the body and the spirit. They accept the body as the real person."

Prabhupāda appreciated the sparseness of the traffic—some trolleys and bicycles, but mostly pedestrians. As he walked among the old, ornate buildings, he saw elderly women hosing the wide streets—a good practice, he said. The Russian people appeared to live structured, regulated lives, much more so than the Americans. These simple, austere people, unspoiled by the rampant hedonism so common in America, were fertile for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But devoid of spiritual sustenance, they appeared morose.

Prabhupāda had Śyāmasundara arrange a meeting with Professor Kotovsky and invite Captain Lal to come along. The tourist bureau provided a car and guide, and Prabhupāda and his party rode outside the city to Professor Kotovsky's office in an old white brick building at the Academy of Sciences.

When Prabhupāda arrived, the middle-aged Russian professor, dressed in a gray suit, got up from his cluttered desk and welcomed Prabhupāda into his small office. Professor Kotovsky appeared a bit hesitant, however, more cautious than in his letters. When Śyāmasundara mentioned Prabhupāda's eagerness to lecture before interested scholars at the Academy, Professor Kotovsky flatly refused—it would never be allowed. Prabhupāda was disappointed.

The next moment, however, Prabhupāda seemed unaffected and began speaking in his humble, genteel manner, sitting in a straight-backed office chair beside Professor Kotovsky, who sat at his desk. Śyāmasundara turned on the tape recorder, which the professor eyed cautiously but didn't object to.

Prabhupāda: "The other day I was reading in the paper, Moscow News. There was a Communist congress, and the president declared that, 'We are ready to get others' experiences to improve.' So I think the Vedic concept of socialism or communism will much improve the idea of Communism."

Professor Kotovsky listened intently and politely as his foreign visitor explained how the gr̥hastha in Vedic culture provides for everyone living in his house—even for the lizards—and how, before taking his meal, he calls in the road to invite any hungry person to come and eat. "In this way," Prabhupāda explained, "there are so many good concepts about the socialist idea of communism. So I thought that these ideas might have been distributed to some of your thoughtful men. Therefore I was anxious to speak."

Professor Kotovsky's academic interest was piqued. "You know, it is interesting," he said, his articulate English heavily accented. "As it is here in our country, there is now great interest in the history of old, old thought." He described the accomplishments of his colleagues and himself, particularly a booklet they had recently prepared highlighting Soviet studies in Indology. He said he would like to give a copy to Prabhupāda.

Professor Kotovsky: "You will be interested to discover that we published not all but some Purāṇas, then some parts of the Rāmāyaṇa, eight volumes in Russian of the Mahābhārata, and also a second edition of the Mahābhārata, translated by different people in full and published. Manu-smṛti is also translated in full and published with Sanskrit commentaries. And such was the great interest that all of these publications were sold in a week. They are now completely out of stock. It is impossible to get them in the book market after a month. Such a great interest among reading people here in Moscow and the U.S.S.R. towards ancient Vedic culture."

Prabhupāda: "Among these Purāṇas, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is called the Mahā-purāṇa." And he told of his own translation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, "the ripened fruit of the Vedic desire tree." He would show some volumes to the professor if he was interested.

Professor Kotovsky said the Moscow and Leningrad libraries had nearly all the major texts of Indian culture in Sanskrit. These libraries housed not only ancient texts but more recent literature as well, comprising an up-to-date study of Hinduism.

"Hinduism," Prabhupāda interrupted, "is a very complex topic." And they both laughed. Professor Kotovsky acknowledged that Hinduism was more than a religion; it was a way of life. But Prabhupāda explained that the name Hindu was actually a misnomer. The real term to explain Vedic culture was varṇāśrama. Briefly Prabhupāda described the four orders: brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra.

Professor Kotovsky: "You have told that in any society there are four divisions, but it is not so easy to distinguish. For instance, one can group together different social classes and professional groups into four divisions in any society. There is no difficulty. The only difficulty is, for instance, in socialist society, in our country and other socialist societies, how can you distinguish productive group and workers?"

Prabhupāda welcomed the professor's questions, although grounded in Soviet socialist vested interests. Prabhupāda considered the professor not so much an academician as a pawn of the Soviet university system; much as one political power tries to understand its adversary, the professor was inquiring into Indian culture so that his government might penetrate it with their own ideology. Behind Professor Kotovsky's apparent interest in Vedic culture, Prabhupāda could see the view of the Communist party, a view diametrically opposed to Vedic philosophy. Nevertheless, Prabhupāda tactfully continued to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness in accord with paramparā, and he tried to convince Professor Kotovsky through scripture and logic.

Quoting Bhagavad-gītā, a śāstra with which the professor was familiar (in his own way), Prabhupāda described Lord Kṛṣṇa as the creator of the four divisions of society. Professor Kotovsky immediately countered with the theory of the Soviet scholars that the varṇāśrama divisions were a

recent addition to Vedic culture. He also again registered his opinion that the divisions of varṇāśrama had no meaning within socialism.

Professor Kotovsky: "There is a great distinction between socialist society and all societies preceding socialism, because in modern Western society you can group all social and professional classes in the particular class divisions—brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas (or factory owners), and śūdras, or menial workers. But here we have no vaiśyas. Because we have administrative staff in factories, managerial staff—you can call them kṣatriyas—and then śūdras, the workers themselves, but not this intermediate class."

Prabhupāda: "That is stated, kalau śūdra-sambhavaḥ. 'In this age, practically all men are śūdras.' That is stated. But if there are simply śūdras, then the social order will be disturbed. In spite of your state of śūdras, the brāhmaṇas are there. That is necessary. So if you do not divide the social order in such a way, then it will be chaos. That is the scientific estimation of the Vedas. You may belong to the śūdra class, but to maintain the social order you have to train some of the śūdras to become brāhmaṇas. It cannot depend on the śūdras."

Prabhupāda gave his standard analogy, comparing the social body to the human body. All the parts are necessary, not only the legs but the belly, the arms, and the head. "Otherwise," he said, "it will not work properly. As long as this is going on, there will be some disturbance."

Modern society's missing point, Prabhupāda said, was an understanding of the purpose of human life. "They do not know what is the next life," he said. "There is no department of knowledge or scientific department to study what is there after finishing this body."

Professor Kotovsky objected—politely, completely. "Swamiji," he said, "when the body dies, the owner also dies." Prabhupāda marked his reply.

"No," Prabhupāda quickly replied. "This fact you must know. Why is there no department of knowledge in the university to study this fact scientifically? That is my proposition. That department is lacking. It may be as you say, it may be as I say, but there must be a department of knowledge. Now recently a cardiologist, a doctor in Montreal and Toronto, has accepted that there is a soul. I had some correspondence with him. He strongly believes that there is a soul."

Prabhupāda continued to build his argument: "We accept knowledge from authority." The professor countered that everything had to be accepted on the basis of empirical evidence. But then, in midsentence, he stopped arguing and inquired, "Have you many branches of your society in the world?"

Prabhupāda began speaking about ISKCON, with its sixty-five branches all around the world, and of how he was going next to Paris, where his disciples had recently acquired a new center, and of how the American boys and girls especially were joining his movement. He told of the four prohibitive rules (no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, and no gambling) and of the books he had published. As Prabhupāda described the workings of his movement, Professor Kotovsky nodded approvingly.

When Prabhupāda returned to comparing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to Communism, he concluded that the two philosophies were in agreement. And both stressed surrender to an authority. The devotee surrenders to Kṛṣṇa, the Communist to Lenin.

Prabhupāda: "Our life is by surrender, is it not? Do you disagree with this point?"

Kotovsky: "To some extent you surrender."

Prabhupāda: "Yes. To the full extent."

Kotovsky: "You have to surrender to the society, for instance—the whole people."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, to the whole people or to the state or king or government or whatever you say. The surrender must be there. It may be different."

Kotovsky: "The only difficulty is we cannot have surrender to government or to a king. The principal difference is of surrender to a king, who is a single person, or to the whole society."

Prabhupāda: "No, that is a change of color only. But the surrender is there. The principle of surrender is there. Whether you surrender to monarchy, democracy, aristocracy, or dictatorship, you have to surrender. That is a fact. Without surrender there is no life. It is not possible. So we are educating persons to surrender to the Supreme, wherefrom you get all protection. Just like Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*. So surrender is there. No one can say, 'No, I am not surrendered to anyone.' The difference is where he surrenders. And the ultimate surrendering object is Kṛṣṇa. Therefore in *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said, *bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate*: "After surrendering to so many things, birth after birth, when one is factually wise he surrenders unto Me."

Professor Kotovsky agreed. But surrender had to be accompanied by revolution, he said. The French Revolution, for example, was a revolt against one kind of surrender, and yet the revolution itself was another surrender, surrender to the people. "So it is not enough to come full stop," the Professor argued. "Surrender is to be accompanied with revolt against surrender to other people."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, the surrender will be full stopped when it is surrender to Kṛṣṇa. That is full stop: no more surrender. Other surrender you have to change by revolution. But when you come to Kṛṣṇa, then it is sufficient—you are satisfied. Just like—I give you one example. A child is crying and people change laps: "Oh, it has not stopped.' But as soon as the baby comes to the lap of its mother..."

Kotovsky: "It stops."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, full satisfaction. So this surrender, the changes will go on in different categories. The sum total of all these surrenders is surrender to *māyā* (material illusion). But the final surrender is to Kṛṣṇa, and then you will be happy."

After only three days, Prabhupāda's mission in Moscow seemed finished. The meeting with Professor Kotovsky over, what was left? The government would allow nothing else. It had not allowed him to bring in books, and now he had been refused the opportunity to speak publicly. Foreigners were not to talk with the Russians. He could go nowhere, unless on an accompanied tour. So with no preaching and no prospects, he stayed in his cramped room, taking his massage, bathing, accepting whatever food Śyāmasundara could gather and cook, dictating a few letters, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Prabhupāda took a guided tour of Moscow, riding with other tourists on a crowded bus. He saw elderly Russians going to church, armed guards stationed at the door. He soon tired of the tour, however, and the tour guide got him a taxi and instructed the driver to return him to the Hotel National.

Śyāmasundara continued to spend most of his day looking for fresh food. Hearing that oranges were available at a certain market across town, he set out across the city. With his shaved head and his white dhotī and kurtā he drew stares from everyone he passed, and as he was returning after dark, uniformed men wearing red armbands accosted him, taking him to be a local deviant. Grabbing him, they pinned his arms behind his back and shouted at him in Russian. Śyāmasundara caught the word *dakumyent* ("document, passport"). He replied, "Dakumyent, hotel! Hotel!" Realizing Śyāmasundara was a tourist, the officers released him, and he returned to the hotel and informed Prabhupāda of what had taken place. "There is no hope in Russia without Kṛṣṇa consciousness," Prabhupāda said.

Once Śyāmasundara was standing in line at the yogurt store when a man behind him asked him about yoga. "I really want to talk with you," the man said, and he gave Śyāmasundara his name and address and a time they could safely meet. When Śyāmasundara told Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda said, "No, he is a policeman. Don't go."

One day two young men, one the son of an Indian diplomat stationed in Moscow, the other a young Muscovite, were loitering near Red Square when they saw an amazing sight. Out of the usual regimented routine of city traffic, a tall young man with a shaved head, a long reddish ponytail, and flowing white robes approached. It was Śyāmasundara. Familiar with Śyāmasundara's dress, the son of the Indian diplomat stopped him. Śyāmasundara smiled. "Hare Kṛṣṇa, brother." And he began talking with the Indian, whose name was Nārāyaṇa. The Russian, Ivan, knew a little English and followed the conversation as closely as he could. The talk grew serious.

"Why don't you come up and meet my spiritual master?" Śyāmasundara asked. Honored, the boys immediately accompanied Śyāmasundara to the Hotel National. When they arrived, they found Prabhupāda seated on his bed, aglow and smiling, Aravinda massaging his feet. Śyāmasundara entered, offering obeisances before Prabhupāda. Ivan was completely fascinated.

"Come on," Prabhupāda said, and the three of them sat at Prabhupāda's feet. Turning first to Nārāyaṇa, Prabhupāda asked his name and his father's occupation. Nārāyaṇa liked Prabhupāda and offered to bring him green vegetables; his father, being highly placed at the Indian Embassy, had produce flown in from India.

Ivan was interested even more than his Indian friend, and Prabhupāda began explaining to him the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, while Nārāyaṇa helped by translating. Ivan inquired with respect and awe, and Prabhupāda answered his questions, teaching as much basic information about Kṛṣṇa consciousness as was possible in one sitting. Prabhupāda explained the difference between the spirit soul and the body and described the soul's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He spoke of Bhagavad-gītā, of his network of temples around the world, and of his young men and women disciples all practicing bhakti-yoga.

Prabhupāda mentioned his desire to preach in Russia, which was a great field for Kṛṣṇa consciousness because the people were openminded and hadn't been polluted by sense gratification. He wanted to introduce Kṛṣṇa conscious literature in Russia through a library or a reading room or in whatever way possible. Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, he said, should be taught to Russia's most intelligent people, but because of government restrictions it would have to be done discreetly. Devotees would not be able to sing and dance in the streets, but they could chant quietly together in someone's home. Prabhupāda then began singing very quietly, leading the boys in kīrtana.

Ivan's taking to Kṛṣṇa was like a hungry man's eating a meal. After several hours, however, he and his friend had to go. They would return the next day.

Śyāmasundara began spending time with Ivan and Nārāyaṇa. Ivan, a student of Oriental philosophies, was very intelligent and eager to know what was going on in the outside world. He was fond of the Beatles, and Prabhupāda told him of his association with George Harrison and John Lennon. Ivan and Śyāmasundara had long talks about the ambitions and hopes of young people outside Russia, and Śyāmasundara explained to him how Kṛṣṇa consciousness was the topmost of all spiritual paths. Śyāmasundara also taught him basic principles of bhakti-yoga, such as chanting the prescribed sixteen rounds of japa daily, and gave him his own copy of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.

Prabhupāda showed Ivan how to prepare capātīs and rice and asked him to give up eating meat. Joyfully, Ivan accepted the chanting, the new way of eating—everything. Ivan was being trained so that after Prabhupāda left, Ivan could continue on his own. Ivan would be able to feel himself changing and advancing in spiritual life, and after practicing for some time he could be initiated. Ivan said he would tell his friends about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. With only two days left in Moscow, Prabhupāda taught Ivan as much as he could. In this young Russian's eagerness and intelligence, Prabhupāda found the real purpose of his visit to Russia.

Prabhupāda gave the analogy that when cooking rice the cook need test only one grain to determine whether the whole pot of rice is done. Similarly, by talking with this one Russian youth, Prabhupāda could tell that the Russian people were not satisfied in their so-called ideal land of Marxism. Just as Ivan was keenly receptive to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, millions of other Russians would be also.

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says that one blooming flower can refresh a whole forest and that a fire in a single tree can burn the whole forest. From the Marxist point of view, Ivan was the fire that would spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others, thus defeating the communist ideology. And from Prabhupāda's point of view, he was the aromatic flower that would lend its fragrance to many others.

Prabhupāda's visit to Russia was no obscure interlude, but had become an occasion for planting the seed of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a destitute land.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had brought the movement of Lord Caitanya to yet another country. Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself had predicted that the saṅkīrtana movement would go to every town and village, yet for hundreds of years that prediction had remained unfulfilled. Prabhupāda, however, in the few years since his first trip to America in 1965, had again and again planted Lord Caitanya's message in one unlikely place after another. And of all places, this was perhaps the most unlikely; during a brief, government-supervised visit to Moscow, he had planted the seed of Kṛṣṇa consciousness within the Soviet Union. He was like the needle, and everyone and everything connected with him was like the thread that would follow.

Professor Kotovsky had remarked that Prabhupāda's stay in an old-fashioned hotel would not prove very interesting. But Prabhupāda, unknown to Professor Kotovsky, was transcendental to Moscow or any other place in the material world. Prabhupāda had come to this place, and Kṛṣṇa had sent a sincere soul to him to receive the gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This had happened not by devious espionage against the Soviet government but by the presence of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee and his natural desire to satisfy Kṛṣṇa by preaching. In response to Prabhupāda's pure desire, Kṛṣṇa had sent one boy, and from that one boy the desire would spread to others. Nothing, not even an Iron Curtain, could stop Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The soul's natural function was to serve Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa's natural will was to satisfy the pure desires of His devotee.

In a farewell letter to Professor Kotovsky, Prabhupāda tried to encourage further correspondence.

You wanted to see the manuscripts of my lectures, therefore I am sending herewith an Introduction to the lectures, and if you so desire I shall be glad to send essays on these subjects:

1. Vedic Conceptions of Socialism and Communism
2. Scientific Values of Classless Society
3. Knowledge by Authoritative Tradition

In a letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda summed up his Moscow visit.

The city is well-planned. There are big, big houses and roads and at day time the streets are busy with buses, cars, and underground trains which are far better than American or English. The underground streets are very neat and clean. The surface streets are also daily washed. But there is some difficulty in collecting vegetarian foodstuffs; still we are cooking our meals by the cooker which has saved our lives. We talked with one big professor Mr. Kotovsky, and Shyamsundar talked with many great writers and musicians. Two boys are working with us; one Indian and one Russian. So there is good prospect for opening a center, although the atmosphere is not very good. The embassy was no help. So our visit to Moscow was not so successful, but for the future, it is hopeful. Tomorrow I go to Paris for one day, then to S.F. Ratha-yātrā and then I shall come back to London.

* * *

Paris

June 25, 1971

Śrīla Prabhupāda was lying on the couch in the conference room of the Indian Tourist Office, having just come from Orly Airport. Two disciples, Ārādhana and his wife, Śantanu, had come with him in the taxi and were the only others in the room. Since there was to be a press conference later, Prabhupāda said he wanted to rest, and he closed his eyes.

At the airport, Paris immigration officials had detained Prabhupāda while some thirty European devotees, none of whom had ever met him, had waited anxiously. They had glimpsed him as he had walked from the plane to the terminal building, and they had watched him carrying his sannyaśa-
daṇḍa with umbrella strapped to it. He had waved to them, holding up his bead bag. But then he had been kept from them, just beyond a thin wall, until finally, after two hours, Paris immigration had allowed him through.

The Paris devotees had not arranged a car for Prabhupāda, so when he had asked for one, several devotees had run off to hail a taxi. When the taxi had arrived, Prabhupāda, along with Ārādhana and Śantanu, had started for the Indian Tourist Office, leaving the others to join him later.

After a brief rest, Prabhupāda opened his eyes and saw Ārādhana, Śantanu, and Śyāmasundara in the room. The other devotees and the press would be arriving soon. As Prabhupāda sat up, Śantanu offered him some mango, and Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled.

Yogeśvara: I sat outside the door to Prabhupāda's room, eating the peel of the mango Prabhupāda had eaten. My heart was pounding, and I had no idea what it was going to be like after having been initiated for a year and a half and having never met my spiritual master personally—but now knowing that he was just behind that door!

Then Śyāmasundara opened the door and peered out and saw me sitting there. He stuck his head back inside the door and said, "There's a devotee here. Shall I let him in now, Śrīla Prabhupāda?" I peeked around the door, and Śrīla Prabhupāda, who had been lying down on the couch, was now sitting up with his hand on his knee very solidly, with a royal, majestic look. He responded to Śyāmasundara's question by motioning with his hand that we could all come in. It was the first perfect thing I had ever seen in my life—that one gesture. So I came in and immediately fell flat on the floor. And then I understood that "Now I am with my spiritual master."

Gradually the devotees began arriving from the airport, and they came into Prabhupāda's room. The press also arrived, as Prabhupāda spoke warmly and pleasantly with his followers, encouraging them in their preaching and telling them of his own recent preaching in Moscow. Hardly any of the devotees had ever been with their spiritual master before, and Locanānanda began introducing them to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Hari-vilāsa: I arrived late, and when I came in I was mixed up with surprise, with elation, with egotistical pride, and with amazement that the Lord's pure devotee was there. I walked in with Ghanaśyāma, the boy who had started translating some of Prabhupāda's books into French. The room was almost filled, and Ghanaśyāma immediately sat down in the back. I was the president of the temple, and I was very proud and puffed up about it. So I made my way all the way up to the front, where Śrīla Prabhupāda was, and I sat down right next to him. I looked at him, expecting him to look at me and smile or something, some recognition. But he didn't look at me at all.

Locanānanda was introducing all the devotees to Prabhupāda. Locanānanda said, "This is Ghanaśyāma. He is the translator." Prabhupāda said, "Where is he?" And everyone looked around to Ghanaśyāma in the back. Prabhupāda said, "Let him stand up, please." Ghanaśyāma stood, and Prabhupāda looked at him and smiled and said, "Oh, thank you very much."

Right then I felt a little funny. I sat there wondering, "What have I done? I've walked all the way up to the front, and I'm expecting so much recognition."

Then Locanānanda said, "This is Hari-vilāsa. He is the president of the temple." Prabhupāda didn't even look at me. And I knew, yes, I had made a big mistake. I began to realize, "This is my spiritual master." Because immediately he had acted in such a way as to point out a great fault in me.

Reporters began their questioning, and Prabhupāda patiently answered them, taking advantage of their sometimes superficial questions to elaborate on the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and explain the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The conference ran one hour.

As Prabhupāda left the Indian Tourist Office he found that there was no car to take him to the temple. While several devotees ran around trying to find a taxi, Prabhupāda waited, standing before a sidewalk cafe.

Thinking that Prabhupāda must be tired from the rigorous press conference and his long flight from Moscow, one of the devotees asked, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, would you like to sit here for a minute?" And the devotee pulled one of the cafe chairs out away from its table.

"What is this place?" Prabhupāda asked.

"This is a sidewalk cafe," the devotee replied.

"What do people do here? Do they smoke and drink?"

"Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda, it's a cafe. They serve alcoholic beverages."

"No," Prabhupāda replied. "Guru cannot sit in such a place."

When Prabhupāda reached the temple, he bathed and took prasādam. The next day he was scheduled to leave for Los Angeles, and his one day in Paris was filled with outside engagements. He rested and again went out to preach.

The devotees had rented the Olympia Theater, a large auditorium meant to seat more than two thousand. But because the devotees had advertised Prabhupāda's lecture only two days in advance, only forty people attended. Prabhupāda was undaunted, and he lectured and held kīrtana. Afterward he went to a television studio for an interview.

By the time Prabhupāda returned to the temple, it was one in the morning. Śyāmasundara told the devotees, who had all accompanied Prabhupāda during the day, that they should rest a full six hours before rising. But the next morning Prabhupāda rose as usual, and at five o'clock he was demanding to know why there was no maṅgala-ārati. He sent his servant to wake the devotees, and as the devotees were hurrying to the temple room to begin their morning worship Prabhupāda was going out on his morning walk.

Accompanying Prabhupāda on his walk were Śyāmasundara, Ara vinda, and the Paris temple president, Hari-vilāsa. The spring morning was sunny, and Prabhupāda, walking with his cane, appeared noble. "Śyāmasundara," Prabhupāda asked, "Why are all the householders in māyā?" When Śyāmasundara couldn't reply, Prabhupāda said, "That's all right. That is their position—to be in māyā."

He said that when he had gone to America his plans had been to make sannyāsī, but when he saw the free mixing of the sexes in the West he had decided to let his disciples first get married and have a child, and then the wife could go to Vṛndāvana with the child, and the husband could take sannyāsa. Prabhupāda laughed. Man becomes entangled by his family, he said—by his home, his bank account, his animals, and so many other attachments.

Near the end of his walk, Prabhupāda spoke specifically of Paris. "Three things are prominent here," he said, "wine, women, and money. What do you think, Hari-vilāsa? Is this a fact?"

Hari-vilāsa replied, "Yes, Prabhupāda, this is definitely a fact—wine, women, and money."

Prabhupāda said that although these attachments were very strong, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement could overcome their influence.

Prabhupāda said that the houses in the Paris suburb, with their attractive fenced-in yards, were excellent. But everything was being wasted for sense gratification. Although a French gentleman may have such a first-class house, garden, wife, bank account, and car, he has no spiritual knowledge. Therefore, he would always remain attached to his first-class possessions, and at the end of his life his great attachment would lead him to take birth as a cockroach or rat or dog within that same house.

As Prabhupāda and the devotees continued walking, Prabhupāda asked Hari-vilāsa how he thought the temple's preaching was faring. Hari-vilāsa said he thought it would be successful but that it might be a good idea to make extra income by starting a business.

"Your business is preaching," Prabhupāda said. "If there are some householders, they can do business."

When Prabhupāda and his party arrived at the temple, they found the devotees eagerly waiting for Prabhupāda's morning Bhāgavatam lecture. But there was no time. Prabhupāda had to leave at once for the airport. He was returning to America.

SPL 35: "This Remote Corner Of the World"

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

"This Remote Corner

Of the World"

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda had been away from America for a year, his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement had flourished, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, and the devotees' attachment for him had grown. His disciples, having heard reports and seen photos of his triumphant tour of India, had felt inspired to increase their own preaching. In each American center new devotees had been joining and were learning Prabhupāda's teachings from the senior devotees. Already accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda as their spiritual master, hundreds of newcomers were eagerly awaiting initiation.

How different from Prabhupāda's first arrival in America, alone in 1965. Walking the cold streets with no money and no temple, he had been ignored. Sometimes he had thought of quitting, taking a boat back to India. But he had maintained absolute faith. And now, less than six years later, in dozens of ISKCON centers throughout America, hundreds of disciples worshiped him and would throng ecstatically to receive him.

Los Angeles

June 26, 1971

When Prabhupāda had left Los Angeles a year ago, the political turmoil there had troubled his mind, but on returning he found the devotees recovered. Faithfully they were executing his orders to chant publicly, distribute Back to Godhead magazine, and worship the Deity of Rukmiṇī-Dvārakādhīśa. In the gorgeously decorated Los Angeles temple, Prabhupāda performed a large initiation ceremony, accepting dozens of new disciples.

On June 27 Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled from Los Angeles to San Francisco for the fifth annual Rathayātrā. Two hundred followers met him at the airport.

"How many devotees do you have?" a reporter asked.

"Unlimited," Prabhupāda said. "Some admit and some don't admit. Admit you are a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and your life will be a success."

After two days in San Francisco, Prabhupāda returned to Los Angeles and on July 16 flew to Detroit. Bhagavān dāsa, Prabhupāda's Governing Body secretary for the Midwest, had preached vigorously in his zone, opening centers in St. Louis, Chicago, and other cities. Almost three

hundred devotees, most of whom had never seen Prabhupāda, assembled at the Detroit airport to receive him.

Sureśvara: Devotees had come from all over the midwestern U.S. and eastern Canada to greet Śrīla Prabhupāda at Detroit's Metro Airport. A red and gold throne stood in the center of the reception room, and the devotees were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and dancing, awaiting Prabhupāda's arrival. When the plane finally landed, all bliss broke loose. The disembarkation dolly joined the plane, but we couldn't see Śrīla Prabhupāda. I became anxious—when would he enter the room? Suddenly a cry went up, and I looked around. Devotees were bowing down.

Urukrama: Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the room as bright as the sun, and everyone immediately prostrated themselves on the floor. Not like the other times when we bowed down together, but this was like an overwhelming force hit us and we were being thrown to our knees. When I stood up, I couldn't believe my eyes. There was Prabhupāda! Almost everyone in the room was crying.

Indradyumna: My first glimpse of Prabhupāda was through the lens of my camera, and I thought he looked just like he did in his pictures. I had only seen him in pictures, and now he looked just like the pictures, only moving. All the devotees began to cry and fall to the ground. It was a transcendental, emotional thing. I was looking, watching all the older devotees—how much love they had for Śrīla Prabhupāda. And I was feeling unqualified and sinful.

Urukrama: Prabhupāda appeared powerful, yet at the same time delicate and soft, like a very wonderful flower. As he moved along very slowly, the devotees lined up and made an aisle for him to walk. He walked up to Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja, put a garland around him, and embraced him. Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja was crying tears of ecstasy, and he looked like a little boy next to his father. Then Prabhupāda went to Bhagavān and patted him on the head. Then he embraced Bhagavān, who also began to weep like a little boy who has just seen his father after a very long time.

Viśvakarmā: I arrived late. When I got there, I was afraid to look at Śrīla Prabhupāda, because I felt too fallen to look upon the pure representative of the Lord. So I stayed behind a wall of devotees, afraid to look. Finally, I realized this is ridiculous, as the perfection of the eyes is to behold the form of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee. I raised my head, and I saw him sitting on his vyāsāsana, drinking a cup of water. Never had I seen anyone drink water like that—without touching the goblet to their mouth. The water poured from the cup like a shining silver stream, straight into Śrīla Prabhupāda's mouth and throat, and he finished the water in a few swallows. He appeared to be a grand sage from the spiritual realm, and as everyone chanted, he looked around at the devotees, smiling with great pleasure. Everyone was overwhelmed with transcendental joy, and I joined with over half the devotees in weeping.

Prabhupāda began speaking.

“This is very satisfactory that so many devotees, boys and girls, are taking part in this great movement, Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. It is a very important movement, because it is correcting the human civilization. It is a great defect in the modern civilization—people are accepting this body as self. And based on this mistake in the foundation, everything is going wrong.

Accepting this body as the self is the beginning of all problems. The great philosophers, scientists, theologians, and thoughtful men do not know what is the defect.

"Recently I was in Moscow. So I had a nice talk with a professor of Indology, Professor Kotovsky. He was speaking that, 'Swamiji, after this annihilation of this body, everything is finished.' So I was astonished that a learned professor, posing himself in a very responsible post, had no idea about the soul and the body—how they are different, how the soul is migrating from one body to another..."

As Prabhupāda spoke, a voice announced over the public address system that the departure lounge had to be cleared for the next flight. "They are speaking about ourselves?" Prabhupāda asked. "We shall stop? All right. Let us go."

That evening, in the temple room of Detroit's ISKCON center, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat on his vyāsāsana before the deities of Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Balarāma. While a devotee led the kīrtana, Prabhupāda played his karatālas, looking around the room at his disciples. He was nodding his head, pleased to see them dancing and chanting. After the kīrtana, he lectured.

"Just see how their characters are being formed, how they are becoming purified, how their faces are becoming brighter. It is practical. So our request is, take full advantage of the center—you come here. It is being guided by one of my best disciples, Bhagavān dāsa. So he and others will help you. Please come regularly to this temple and take advantage of it."

After his lecture, Prabhupāda asked for questions. Bahulāśva raised his hand. "Śrīla Prabhupāda, what is the thing that will please you the most?"

"Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda replied, and the devotees spontaneously cried out, "Jaya! Jaya!"

Prabhupāda: "That is the simplest thing. You are chanting. I am very much pleased. That's all. I came to your country to chant that you would chant also along with me. You are helping me by chanting, so I am pleased.

"But this tendency is very nice, that you want to please me. That is very good. And to please me is not very difficult. Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that 'Under My order, every one of you go preach and become spiritual master.' And what is that order? The order is, 'Whomever you meet, you talk to him about Kṛṣṇa.'"

Prabhupāda emphasized that if one wanted to preach and represent Kṛṣṇa, then he could not change the message of Kṛṣṇa but must repeat what Kṛṣṇa says. "I have come here for the first time," Prabhupāda continued, "but before me, Bhagavān dāsa, he has organized. And what is his credit? He has presented things as I told him. That's all. This is wonderful. In Los Angeles also a program is going on very nicely. My disciple in charge there is Karandhara. He is present here. He is simply doing what I instruct, and he is doing very nicely—first class. Everyone who comes, they come and are enchanted by the temple, with the activities, with the disciples. So this is the way. This is called paramparā system. Don't concoct."

As Prabhupāda was leaving the temple that evening, the mother of one of his disciples approached him. "You know," she said, "these boys actually worship you!"

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "that is our system. I am also worshiping my Guru Mahārāja." The devotees around Prabhupāda looked at one another and smiled. Although the woman had tried to make it appear extraordinary that Prabhupāda's disciples worshiped him, Prabhupāda had taken it casually. One must worship the guru. It was the Vaiṣṇava standard and nothing to wonder at.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda had so many centers in the U.S. that to visit each one was not practical. During his year in India, many new centers had opened—on the West Coast, in Florida, Texas, the Midwest, the East. Prabhupāda said he had more establishments than a wealthy businessman, and more residences. Were he to stay at each of his "houses," he quipped, he couldn't visit them all in a year. And especially to Indian audiences he would cite the monthly expenditures for his centers.

Though proud of ISKCON's growth, Prabhupāda was never proud on his own account; he never considered using ISKCON for his own enjoyment. Whenever he visited a center, his quarters were usually an apartment arranged at the last minute, often fraught with annoyances like noisy neighbors and incompetent cooks. At seventy-five years, his constant traveling was hardly an arrangement for his health and comfort.

Prabhupāda never felt complacent over the small success his society enjoyed, nor would he claim the credit for that success. Rather, he said, it was due to the mercy of his spiritual master and the previous spiritual masters. ISKCON still had but little influence in the world; people considered it a small, exotic religious sect. But by the blessings of the previous ācāryas, it was growing. Prabhupāda was initiating more and more disciples, and the potential was unlimited.

One of Lord Caitanya's chief followers, Jīva Gosvāmī, had warned that a spiritual master should not accept many disciples; many neophyte disciples would bring suffering to the spiritual master. Yet on Prabhupāda's U.S. tour during the summer of 1971, he initiated more disciples than ever before. As Lord Caitanya's empowered representative, he wanted to increase the number of devotees more and more. He was aware of the risk, but he was also aware of the great need. As he had written in *The Nectar of Devotion*,

The one point is that without increasing the number of disciples, there is no propagation of the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, sometimes even at a risk, a sannyāsī in the line of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu may accept even a person who is not thoroughly fit to become a disciple. Later on, by the mercy of such a bona fide spiritual master, the disciple is gradually elevated. However, if one increases the number of disciples simply for some prestige or false honor, he will surely fall down in the matter of executing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's test of a prospective disciple's readiness for initiation was standard: the candidate must have followed the four rules and chanted sixteen rounds daily for at least six months and have the recommendation of the temple president and local G.B.C. secretary.

Prabhupāda accepted anyone who fulfilled these conditions, and he expected the disciple to remain sincere and true to the vows of initiation.

Despite Prabhupāda's growing number of disciples, he intimately touched each of their hearts. Although a few disciples enjoyed extended association with him, most of his hundreds of disciples saw him only from afar. Yet each of them was certain that Prabhupāda was his own. Each could say "my spiritual master." Each could say "Prabhupāda" and feel close to their dearest friend and well-wisher, the one who was saving them from death. They knew that Prabhupāda was the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa and the most empowered ācārya of Lord Caitanya's message. Those who were sincere knew without doubt that their connection with Prabhupāda was transcendental, not to be interrupted or limited by physical or geographical considerations. If they surrendered to Prabhupāda's orders, Kṛṣṇa within their hearts would help them advance. If they were sincere, Kṛṣṇa would help them become better disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The devotees' love for Prabhupāda was not a vague sentiment. He was engaging them in Kṛṣṇa's service, and they were directly experiencing the transcendental results. Only a devotee, however, could understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's personality or the depth of his disciples' attraction for him or the debt they owed him. No wonder onlookers at the Detroit airport had not understood the apparently delirious devotees in their blissful reception of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

* * *

New York City

July 19, 1971

After Detroit, Prabhupāda visited Boston and then flew to New York, where another large group of devotees had gathered. The New York Daily News covered his airport arrival with photos and an article: "Swami, How They Love You."

Bhavānanda, the New York temple president, had decorated the temple room of the Brooklyn center with bright colors. Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana was a special creation of plaids, stripes, and checks in fuchsia, lime, black, white, and red. Prabhupāda liked it very much.

Two hundred devotees—many having waited for more than a year to be initiated—converged on the Brooklyn temple, and Prabhupāda held initiations for five consecutive days, initiating around two dozen disciples each day. One after another, the young men and women would approach Prabhupāda on his multicolored vyāsāsana to receive their initiation beads and spiritual names. Those receiving the brāhmaṇa initiation went one by one to see Prabhupāda in his room and receive the Gāyatrī mantra.

Madhumāṅgala: I went to Prabhupāda's room and offered obeisances. "Come here," he said. So I went and sat close to him. He began teaching me the Gāyatrī mantra, and I was looking up at him. The sun was right behind his head. He looked like a mountain, like the Himalayas, and I was like a mole, a stone. He was very big, and I seemed very insignificant.

Rikthānanda: Prabhupāda turned to face me, and his eyes seemed like limitless pools of an entrancing liquid. I knew he was focused always on Kṛṣṇa, and his eyes were a reflection of that happiness. He said something to me, and I said, "No, sir." Saying "sir" to him seemed natural, and he seemed to be happy that I had said it. Then in a very clear, soft, steady voice, he began to teach me the Gāyatrī mantra. Then he took the sacred thread and put it around my neck and across my shoulder, very gracefully and with such precision in his movements. "Now," he said, "you are a brāhmaṇa."

Daivī-śakti: Prabhupāda had the Gāyatrī mantra written on a small piece of paper, and as he was teaching it to me he had his eyes closed. I would repeat it word for word after him. When he got to the third line, however, instead of saying gurudevāya he said the word from the fifth line. I didn't know whether to follow what he had said or just say what was on the paper. So I said what was on the paper, and then Prabhupāda immediately realized what he had done and changed it. But I suddenly realized that the perfect chanting of mantras was not so significant. Prabhupāda was fully absorbed in thinking of Kṛṣṇa, and although there may have been some apparent flaw in his pronunciation, he was perfect, regardless. I saw that the real perfection of devotional service was to follow Prabhupāda.

After I received my Gāyatrī mantra, I asked Prabhupāda if I could ask him some questions, and he said yes. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," I said, "I haven't been able to serve you in rapt attention. What can I do to serve you?" I was praying he would give me a special service to do for him personally. "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa," was all he said.

"Is there anything more?" I asked. He said, "Are you married?" I said, "Yes." So he said, "Serve your husband."

I said, "My husband and I don't get along." So he said, "Be a pūjārī—there are so many things."

His answer seemed to solve all my difficulty. First and foremost was to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. And in addition to that, there are so many other services. If you don't do one of them, then go on to the next one—"There are so many things." When he said those words, it relieved all my anxiety.

In New York Prabhupāda lectured gravely and authoritatively from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, stressing surrender to Kṛṣṇa through surrendering to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Unlike any other Bhāgavatam lecturer, Prabhupāda was able to offer a movement, a society, and a way of life that were fully Kṛṣṇa conscious and that gave any interested person practical entrance into the devotional service of the Lord.

Someone asked how a person who had been very sinful could be relieved of his karma, and Prabhupāda replied simply, "Come and live with us. That's all. Is it very difficult? Our students—they are living with us. You simply come and live with us, and you are free from all karma. Is it difficult? Then do that. We shall give you food, we shall give you shelter, we shall give you nice philosophy. If you want to marry, we shall give you a good wife. What do you want more? So come and live with us. That's all."

Prabhupāda stressed this same point in his lectures: if a person seeking spiritual fulfillment lived and served with the ISKCON devotees, even material fulfillment would come.

"These Kṛṣṇa conscious boys and girls—in sixty centers—they are living in the best houses. They are eating the best food. They are in the best consciousness. They have got the best hope. Everything best. Their feature of body is best. What material happiness do you want more than this? They have got wife, children, happiness, home—everything full. So material happiness is nothing to a Kṛṣṇa conscious person. Material happiness will roll at his feet, saying, 'Please take me, please take me.' There is no need of asking for it. Simply be steady and ask Kṛṣṇa, 'Please engage me in Your service.' Then your satisfaction will automatically come. Don't bother for material happiness."

Nanda-kiśora asked, "What happens to a person out on the street if we just give him one Simply Wonderful* or some prasādam?"

Prabhupāda: "Then it is wonderful—simply wonderful. (The devotees laughed.) He has not tasted such wonderful sweet in his life. Therefore, you give him wonderful, and because he is eating that wonderful sweet, one day he will come to your temple and become wonderful. Therefore it is simply wonderful. So go on distributing this simply wonderful. Your philosophy is simply wonderful, your prasādam is simply wonderful, you are simply wonderful. And your Kṛṣṇa is simply wonderful. The whole process is simply wonderful. Kṛṣṇa acts wonderfully, and it is acting wonderfully. Who can deny it?"

Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja: "Prabhupāda is simply wonderful."

While Prabhupāda continued in New York, poised to leave for London in a few days, his secretary mentioned that many U.S. centers were still vying for his presence. Prabhupāda casually remarked that if any center could arrange a good lecture program and pay his travel expenses plus one thousand dollars, then he would go there before leaving for London.

Hearing this, the devotees in Gainesville, Florida, determined to meet Prabhupāda's transcendental challenge. The temple president, Hṛdayānanda, assigned an uninitiated devotee, David Liberman, to find a sponsor at the University of Florida willing to pay one thousand dollars for Prabhupāda to come and speak. David visited every student organization on campus until he found a donor.

Prabhupāda agreed to come, even though his secretary informed him that the flight would lay over two hours in Atlanta and then continue to Jacksonville, a one-and-a-half-hour car ride from Gainesville.

* * *

Atlanta

July 29, 1971

The ten residents of the recently opened Atlanta temple arranged to receive Prabhupāda during his layover at the Atlanta airport. They prepared a large feast and decorated the Eastern Airlines V.I.P. lounge with fruits, flowers, and garlands.

Bill Ogle: Although Śrīla Prabhupāda was not big physically, he immediately captured the consciousness of the entire Atlanta airport when he entered. Everyone was watching as he walked, with his head held high, his cane moving gracefully with every step. The airport is one of the busiest in the country, but everyone who saw Prabhupāda looked at him in amazement. Airport officials voluntarily began clearing a path for Prabhupāda to walk. But what was even more amazing was that he was so submissive to such insignificant disciples as we.

Prabhupāda entered the V.I.P. lounge with his disciples and about twenty Indian guests. Confronting the portable vyāsāsana atop a marble table, Prabhupāda declined; the seat seemed unsteady. But the devotees assured him that it was sturdy, so Prabhupāda climbed up, sat down, and began leading a kīrtana. After speaking for about fifteen minutes, Prabhupāda concluded his lecture.

"This is not sentimental chanting, but it is based on the soundest philosophy, Vedic literatures. We have got so many books, and you can buy them in our book store. Where is the book store?"

There was a long pause. The devotees had remembered fruits, flowers, the chair, the feast, invitations to the Indians—but they had forgotten Prabhupāda's books. Prabhupāda continued to wait for an answer to his question, until finally the senior disciple, Janamejaya, replied, "Prabhupāda, we usually have a book store."

"Hmm" was all Prabhupāda said. Again a long silence. "So," Prabhupāda said, looking to the audience, "any questions?"

Prabhupāda chatted with the Indians, asking their names and where they were from in India. Most of them were young men with families and treated him respectfully, like a grandfather or a revered swami. One Indian man, about thirty-five, mentioned that he was getting his Ph.D. in biology.

"Oh, biology," Prabhupāda said. "Hmm, poor frogs." Everyone in the lounge—except the biologist—burst into laughter.

"No, no," the biologist protested, embarrassed. "Why 'poor frogs'?"

"Because you are killing," Prabhupāda said.

"But it is for the advancement of knowledge," said the biologist. "So it is worthwhile. It is for the advancement of knowledge."

"All right," said Prabhupāda, "if I ask you now, will you give your body for the advancement of knowledge?" Everyone in the room began to laugh.

"Yes! Yes, I would!" the man replied. But the more he protested, repeating, "Yes, I would!" the more ridiculous he seemed, and the harder everyone laughed.

"How many species of life are there?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Fifty million," the biologist replied.

"Oh?" said Prabhupāda. "You have seen them all?"

"No."

"How many have you seen?"

"Perhaps five thousand."

"And you are wrong," Prabhupāda said. "There are 8,400,000 species of life. We have scientific knowledge from the Vedas."

Bill Ogle: After Prabhupāda took prasāda, we performed a play for him. The play was "The Brāhmaṇa and the Cobbler." I played Viṣṇu. It was terrible. I had to be Viṣṇu, and my wife had to be Lakṣmī. I was lying down as Lord Viṣṇu, and my wife was massaging my feet. Prabhupāda kept looking at me, and I thought he must be thinking, "Who is this rascal playing Viṣṇu?" My feeling was, "This is not very good. I shouldn't be doing this." I was very embarrassed to be in front of Prabhupāda like that.

Jayasena was Nārada Muni, and he offered obeisances about a hundred times throughout the play. Because Prabhupāda was there, Jayasena was constantly offering obeisances to everyone and anything. So although he was playing Nārada Muni, he offered obeisances to the cobbler. But some of the Indians spoke up. They were a little taken aback that Nārada Muni, such a great saint, was offering obeisances to a cobbler, who is ordinarily a very low-class person.

So at this point Prabhupāda interrupted and began to explain. "Actually," he said, "it is all right that Nārada Muni has offered obeisances to the cobbler, because the cobbler is a Vaiṣṇava. Any Vaiṣṇava can receive obeisances, more than a brāhmaṇa." He continued, narrating the play. He told the story, and we continued acting. It was ecstatic.

As Prabhupāda was leaving the lounge to board his flight for Jacksonville, a lady in a wheelchair, the mother of one of the devotees in Atlanta, raised herself up and threw herself at Prabhupāda's feet. With tears in her eyes, she cried out, "I am dying of cancer. Save me! Save me!" Śrīla Prabhupāda bent down and put his hand on her head. "That is all right," he said comfortingly. "That is all right."

As Prabhupāda, garlanded with red roses and magnolias, walked down the corridor toward his plane, the devotees thought that Prabhupāda appeared majestic, like a king. He emanated a golden effulgence, and he seemed powerful, yet humble. The devotees felt spiritual strength and pledged to follow Prabhupāda's teachings. They last glimpsed him walking across the airfield toward the small

plane that would take him to Jacksonville. His saffron silk dhotī and kurtā blowing in the breeze, he turned to them and waved.

* * *

Gainesville

July 29, 1971

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked how fast the car was going and how long it would take them to get to Gainesville. Sixty-five miles per hour, the driver said; it would take an hour and a half. Prabhupāda observed the scenery along the highway—pine forests, marshes, exotic birds, an occasional armadillo foraging near the highway. Lotuses and lilies grew wild in the canals along the roadside, and bright sunshine warmed the clear air.

Gainesville was a side trip for Prabhupāda, a special day of preaching. He had left Śyāmasundara, his secretary, in New York and brought with him only Aravinda, his servant. He had come for a day to bring the mercy of Lord Caitanya to yet another city. When the devotees had picked him up at the airport, he had appeared grave. But on catching sight of the devotees he had smiled wonderfully, and then, turning to Hṛdayānanda, he had asked, “Which way?” He was like a transcendental fighter, asking to be pointed toward the battle.

Prabhupāda walked along a flower-sprinkled pathway and into the temple, a rented house near the University of Florida campus. In the temple room he stood a moment, studying a crude but sincerely executed painting of Lord Caitanya and His associates. Hṛdayānanda asked Prabhupāda if he would like to rest, and he nodded. While the devotees performed kīrtana, Prabhupāda retired to his room, returning later to sit on the large blue velvet vyāsāsana in the small temple room. In addition to Prabhupāda's disciples from Gainesville, Miami, Tallahassee, and New Orleans, many university students and other guests were also present.

“It is so nice to see so many young boys and girls here,” Śrīla Prabhupāda began, “in this remote corner of the world, so far away from the birthplace of Lord Caitanya.”

Prabhupāda lectured about the saving grace of chanting the holy name of the Lord. One of his disciples, he said, had been present when his mother was dying. “Because he had been telling her about Kṛṣṇa and Hare Kṛṣṇa, she said to her son in her last words, “Where is your Kṛṣṇa? Is He here now?” And then she died.” For her uttering the holy name and thinking of Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda said, she would go to the spiritual world.

After Prabhupāda finished his talk, a girl reporter from the university newspaper raised her hand. “I see almost all young people here,” she said. “Why is that?”

Prabhupāda replied with a question: “Why are there so many young people in the university?”

The girl reflected a moment, “Well... I guess that's the age for education.”

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "so this is the age for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You cannot teach an old dog new tricks."

The engagement for which Prabhupāda had come, and for which the University of Florida was paying a thousand dollars, was to be that afternoon on campus at the Plaza of the Americas. When Prabhupāda arrived, several hundred students were gathered near the temporary stage, sitting casually on the grass, lounging beneath the fragrant magnolia trees. The sky was overcast, and rain threatened.

As more students gathered, the crowd grew to five hundred. Then just as Prabhupāda was about to speak, a light drizzle began to fall, and Hṛdayānanda came onstage to hold an umbrella over Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda, sitting on his vyāsāsana, said softly into the microphone, "Someone is smoking," and the students politely extinguished their cigarettes. No sooner did Prabhupāda begin his lecture, however, than a dog started yapping. Prabhupāda paused. "Who is that dog?" he asked. When the dog persisted, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "He also wants to talk." Finally the barking stopped, and so did the rain. But Hṛdayānanda continued to hold the umbrella over Prabhupāda's head.

While riding in the car back to the temple, Prabhupāda asked to hear the tape recording of his lecture. When he heard the dog barking at the beginning of his talk, he laughed.

"Prabhupāda," Hṛdayānanda said, "your lecture was wonderful. Everyone liked it. The students liked it, the devotees liked it, the professors liked it."

"All right," Prabhupāda said. "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's day of preaching was not over yet. Next was an evening television interview.

The interviewer had done some preparatory reading, and he introduced Śrīla Prabhupāda by first describing who Kṛṣṇa was, according to Vedic literature, and how Śrīla Prabhupāda was in the disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya. When the interviewer asked Prabhupāda for an introductory statement, Prabhupāda explained, "The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to invoke in all people the original consciousness that we are a part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa."

When the interviewer asked Prabhupāda, "Who is your spiritual master?" Prabhupāda lowered his head humbly and stated the full name of his Guru Mahārāja, "Om Viṣṇupada Paramahansa Parivrajakācārya Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda."

The interviewer, however, seemed bent on controversy. "In what way, sir, may I ask, did you think and do you think right now that the teaching of love of God that you are preaching is different and perhaps better than the teachings of love of God that were being conducted in this country and have been conducted in the rest of the world for centuries?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "This teaching is the most authorized. That is a fact. We are following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya. He is accepted by us, according to the authority of Vedic religion, to be

personally Kṛṣṇa Himself. For example, you are the expert in this establishment. If someone is doing something under your guidance and if you personally teach him, "Do like this," that is very authorized. So when Lord Caitanya taught God consciousness, God Himself was teaching."

Prabhupāda had answered positively, avoiding the sectarian dispute the interviewer had invited. Yet repeatedly the interviewer tried to involve him in a controversy. He seemed to want Prabhupāda to appear arrogant, sectarian, and anti-American. Prabhupāda, however, insisted he was not opposed to any other religion and that anyone in the world could chant the name of God as it appeared in his religion.

Interviewer: "But there must have been an element of dissatisfaction on your part with the way Godhead was being professed in this part of the world before you came. Otherwise, there would have been no sense in your being here."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "It is not just this part of the world. Practically every part of the world has very little interest in God. They have more interest in dog."

Prabhupāda's answers were strong and philosophically strong. The interviewer, trying his professional best, again attempted to find some fault.

Interviewer: "It seems to me, sir, as interpreted in your writings, that there is a very high emphasis placed on the relationship between the individual and God."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Yes. That is found everywhere."

Interviewer: "Yes, but you place more emphasis on that relationship than on the relationship between one individual and another. Am I right in that?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "We have to establish, first of all, our lost relationship with God. Then we can understand what is our relationship between one individual and another. If the central point is missing, then there is practically no relation. You are an American, and another is an American, and both of you feel American nationality because the center is America. So unless you understand God, you cannot understand who I am, nor can I understand who you are."

Interviewer: "I think that in this part of the world, in the Western world, we place a great deal of emphasis on religion in the ways it gets one man to deal with another man—the ethic of religion. Now in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement..."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "We are not concerned how one man deals with another man."

Interviewer: "Isn't that part of your Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "No, this is not important. Because we know as soon as one knows how to deal with God, he will automatically deal very nicely with others."

Interviewer: "But let's take the Christian religion for an example. You know the ten commandments? There is a heavy emphasis in the ten commandments on the relationships between one human being and another: 'Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not kill.' You know, that sort of thing."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "But I say that Jesus Christ never said and never meant that 'Thou shalt not kill' refers to only human beings. Where is that evidence? Jesus Christ never said that 'Thou shalt not kill' refers only to human beings. Thou shalt not kill any animal."

Interviewer: "Any life?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Any life. That is religion."

Interviewer: "It has never been interpreted that way."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "You have interpreted it differently, but he said, 'Thou shalt not kill.' He never said, 'Thou shalt not kill amongst human beings.' Why do you interpret it that way?"

Prabhupāda had given the TV interviewer the very thing he was after, controversy, but because it was not desirable controversy the interviewer promptly dropped it. Instead, he asked Prabhupāda how one could recognize a true follower of Kṛṣṇa consciousness by his behavior.

"He'd be a perfect gentleman," Prabhupāda said, "that's all... Therefore, I prohibit my disciples to eat meat."

Interviewer: "To eat meat?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Yes. And therefore I prohibit illicit sex life. Therefore I prohibit intoxication. They do not even smoke, what to speak of other intoxication."

When Prabhupāda said that whoever observed these four rules would become a perfect gentleman, the interviewer asked whether there was a place for women in the religion. Prabhupāda replied that women and men had the same rights and followed the same principles. The interviewer asked whether Prabhupāda was encouraged or discouraged, and Prabhupāda said he was encouraged because so many devotees were joining. The interviewer doubted that many were joining, since out of two hundred million Americans, only two dozen devotees were present in the TV studio. "When you sell diamonds," Prabhupāda replied, "you cannot expect that everyone will purchase."

As a final question, the interviewer asked if Prabhupāda had any major complaints about American society.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "I have no complaint. These boys and girls are very nice. I am, rather, encouraged that these boys and girls are hankering after something nice. They are frustrated. So now, since they have the best thing, they are coming."

The interviewer asked Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and within half a minute they were off the air. The hot studio lights went out, and the engineers started talking among themselves. The interviewer bid Śrīla Prabhupāda a polite farewell—he had no intention of continuing their talk—but Śrīla Prabhupāda continued preaching. On-camera or off-camera made no difference to him. He saw the interviewer not merely as a television personality but as someone to receive Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

The two had been sitting very closely for the interview, and Prabhupāda now leaned toward the interviewer and said, “Let me ask you one question. If you have some disease and you want to cure this disease, what is the best way to go about it? By asking a friend or by going to a medical doctor and asking how to cure this disease? Would you go to a friend?”

The man replied, “Yes.” Prabhupāda shook his head. “You would go to a friend?” Again the man said, “Yes.”

The interviewer was not concentrating, so Prabhupāda patiently repeated his example. “Try to understand,” he said. “If you have some disease, then would you go to a medical doctor or would you go to a friend?” The man could not grasp the point, so Prabhupāda answered, “No, you would not go to a friend. You would go to a physician—one who knows the answer. That is the spiritual master.” They talked a while longer, and finally Prabhupāda and the devotees left.

It was almost midnight, and Prabhupāda went to his room. When he had first arrived in Gainesville he had agreed to initiate the five eligible candidates and had even taken their japa beads. But now the day had passed, there had been no initiation, and Prabhupāda still had five strands of beads. Joseph and Sam, who had come all the way from New Orleans, and David Liberman and his wife, Adrienne, and a Gainesville boy named Gary were all in anxiety. They had stayed up, talking among themselves, wondering whether Śrīla Prabhupāda would hold an initiation ceremony in the morning, before he left.

Aravinda told them there would be no time for a ceremony in the morning, but that he would ask Śrīla Prabhupāda when they could have their beads back. He went to Prabhupāda's room, leaving the devotees to sit and talk about Śrīla Prabhupāda. Then Aravinda returned, he surprised everyone by announcing, “Prabhupāda is going to give you your beads now. He is going to give you your initiation in his room.” The devotees excitedly hurried to Śrīla Prabhupāda's room.

Prabhupāda sat on his bed. He wore no shirt, only his dhotī, which he had pushed up high on his thighs and tucked under himself, like a loincloth or gamchā. His body was smooth and glowing. The devotees sat on the floor around his bed while he held their beads in his hands and chanted.

Prabhupāda handed Gary his beads. “So your name is now Dharma dāsa. This means “one who is a strict follower of all religious principles.”

Dharma: I was actually very nervous, and I was practically shaking, because I was afraid I would do something wrong in front of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I was so nervous practically I couldn't even hear properly. But I was very happy to have been accepted by Śrīla Prabhupāda. I knew, of course, there

was no question of ever leaving the movement now. I never wanted to leave anyway, but now this was official. Even if I had considered it before, now there was no question of it.

Then there was Joseph from New Orleans. "What is his name?" Prabhupāda asked Aravinda. Aravinda read from a sheet, "Bhāgavata dāsa." Prabhupāda smiled and said, "Oh, Bhāgavata dāsa. Very good. There are two things. There is the book bhāgavata—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā—and the person bhāgavata, who follows perfectly those teachings. He is a living manifestation of the book bhāgavata. And you are Bhāgavata dāsa. That means you are the servant of the book bhāgavata and the person bhāgavata.

Bhāgavata: I always wanted a name that meant I was the servant of the guru. So when I heard this, I was very happy. Prabhupāda started to hand me my beads, but then he pulled them back and asked, "And what are the four regulative principles?" So I told him, and he said, "Very good."

Then he went to hand me my beads again, but again he pulled them back. He asked, "How many rounds do you chant?" I was very proud, because I had been chanting twenty rounds a day for about five months, so I sat up real straight and said, "You're supposed to chant sixteen rounds a day, Śrīla Prabhupāda. But I chant twenty."

Śrīla Prabhupāda just turned away from me and said, "That's all right." It was like he was saying, "Don't get puffed up." Then he turned to me and said, "Here are your beads."

Handing Dave his beads, Prabhupāda said, "Your name is Amarendra. This means 'the best of the immortals.'" He named Adrienne "Gāyatrī dāśī" and Sam "Suvrata."

When Suvrata stood and Prabhupāda noticed he was not wearing neck beads, he withheld the chanting beads and said, "You have no neck beads? Where are your neck beads?" Prabhupāda turned to Bhāgavata dāsa. "You also have no neck beads?" Bhāgavata thought that Prabhupāda was going to take his chanting beads back, so he hid them against his stomach. Then Prabhupāda turned to the senior devotees in the room, criticizing. "What is the matter with you?" he said sternly. "You are leaders, and you don't know these things? Don't you know that you must put neck beads in giving initiation?"

The senior devotees were frightened by Prabhupāda's anger. "We are sorry, Prabhupāda," someone said. "Tomorrow for the fire yajña they will have neck beads."

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "you cannot do the fire yajña without neck beads. They must have neck beads."

Although it was midnight, Prabhupāda asked if the devotees had any questions. Bhāgavata dāsa raised his hand. "How is it that we are on a transcendental platform but sometimes we are affected by the three modes of nature?"

"It is just like you are on a boat," Prabhupāda replied. "If you are on the boat, then I cannot say you are not on the boat. Is it not? So you are on the transcendental boat. Therefore, you are on the transcendental platform. You cannot say that you are not. But the waves are coming, and they are

rocking the boat." Prabhupāda gestured with his hands like a boat rocking. "So the waves of the material nature are coming," he continued, "and they are rocking the boat. But when you become an expert boatman, then even in the greatest storm you can stay steady and steer the boat, and it will not rock."

"Well, how does one become an expert boatman?" Bhāgavata asked.

"You become expert," Prabhupāda replied, "by becoming enthusiastic, sincere, confident, determined, and patient." Seeing Bhāgavata's anxious face, Prabhupāda added, "And you must be patient. Everything will come in due course."

Sitting informally on the bed, in his abbreviated dhotī, Prabhupāda had answered Bhāgavata's questions in such a way as to fully satisfy all the devotees. The devotees were already satisfied just to be with Prabhupāda, but by his answers to their questions not only they but all devotees could take encouragement and be satisfied. They would tell the others what he had said, and everyone would cherish these instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Amarendra also had a question. Amarendra was intense and impassioned, and so was his inquiry. Before becoming a devotee, he had been a leader of campus radicals. Now he wanted to bring that same intensity to bear in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," Amarendra asked, "how can we make them take to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness? What can we say when we go to preach to people? What can we say that will make them take it?" His voice was heavy and forceful, demanding action.

"You simply ask them to please chant Hare Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda replied. "Whether they take or not, that is their business. That is between them and Kṛṣṇa. But you have done your business. You have done your duty for Kṛṣṇa by simply asking them, 'Please chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.'"

"How do we take our minds away from māyā and bring them to Kṛṣṇa?" Rādhā-vallabha asked.

"You must drag the mind," Prabhupāda said. "You must drag the mind back to the sound vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare." And again he repeated, "You must drag the mind back to the sound vibration."

"All right." Prabhupāda looked around. "You are satisfied now?"

The devotees responded, "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Thank you very much." Then they all left. It had been the greatest day and night of their lives, they all agreed, and they would never forget it.

While Prabhupāda rode to the Jacksonville airport in a car with a few disciples, the other devotees followed in their van, bringing the vyāsāsana from the temple for Prabhupāda to use at the airport. Śrīla Prabhupāda closed his eyes and rested as he rode, and the devotees in the back seat of his car ate the remnants of his prasādam.

Hṛdayānanda: It was my idea to bring Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana to the airport. I was thinking, "How can my spiritual master sit in the same seats that karmīs sit on?" It just seemed impossible. How

could Prabhupāda put his lotus body, how could he sit, on the same seats as the karmīs? I was very agitated by that. Amarendra had built the vyāsāsana, and he used to build everything like a tank. The vyāsāsana must have weighed several hundred pounds. It took four or five devotees to carry it.

So Prabhupāda arrived first, and the vyāsāsana wasn't there. By the time he got to his boarding gate and the vyāsāsana still wasn't there, I was in anxiety, because I didn't want him to sit in a regular seat. I thought it would be a great offense on my part. Then as I looked down the long, long airport corridor, I saw six brahmācārīs, half of them without their shoes on, lugging Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana down the corridor. It was such an absurd scene. Prabhupāda just stood there looking in disbelief and disgust, and finally several sweating, groaning brahmācārīs came and dropped the vyāsāsana down in front of Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda just looked at it with disdain, walked past it, and sat down in the ordinary seat.

While most of the devotees sat at Prabhupāda's feet, chanting the Gurv-aṣṭaka prayers to the spiritual master, Hṛdayānanda was preaching to the people who were standing and watching the spectacle. He had some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, and he was trying to distribute them. Prabhupāda gave more attention to this preaching than to the devotees seated at his feet.

* * *

Having visited half a dozen cities in a little more than a month's time, Śrīla Prabhupāda was planning next to visit London. Clearly, his field had become the entire world. And his traveling was the practical enactment of his conviction that Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be given to people everywhere.

By Prabhupāda's wide traveling and bold preaching, the old idea that the Bhagavad-gītā and Kṛṣṇa were only for the Hindus had become an anachronism, a prejudice. Barriers of race, religion, nation, sex, class—all were now down. The Hindu saying that a swami should not cross the ocean had become a superstition, intended perhaps to protect lesser swamis but certainly never to restrict the message of the Absolute Truth from being spread.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu's express desire was that in every town and village of the world His name be heard, and no Vedic injunction could prohibit that. Of course, the Vedic literatures advised a devotee to live in a secluded place and avoid worldly men and women, and they advised a devotee not to disturb the minds of innocent persons or preach to the faithless. According to one Vedic injunction, a devotee should not even see the face of a nonbeliever. Such rules and regulations, however, intended mainly for the protection and purification of the neophytes, were superseded by a stalwart ācārya acting on the higher principle of compassion.

And in support of that higher principle Lord Kṛṣṇa had promised, "My devotee shall never be vanquished." The surrendered preacher, taking up Lord Caitanya's highest order, would be immunized against contamination, despite regular contact with worldly persons. Even at the risk of his own spiritual life, the preacher approached worldly people, and in return Kṛṣṇa protected him.

Prabhupāda was merciful to everyone, everywhere. Therefore he was jagad-guru, the spiritual master for the entire world. To become jagad-guru didn't mean to claim that one was better than

everyone else or that he was the best guru in the world. Jagad-guru meant that, like Nārada Muni, a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness went everywhere, preached everywhere, and had disciples everywhere. And Śrīla Prabhupāda did that.

On arriving at one U.S. airport, Śrīla Prabhupāda had mentioned that yogīs had formerly traveled in three different ways: by flying carpet, by pigeons, and by mantra. "Then why have you come today on American Airlines?" the reporter had challenged. "Just to be one with you," Śrīla Prabhupāda had said, smiling.

But that Prabhupāda had come by jet instead of by some extraordinary mystic power was actually no less miraculous. The miracle was that he was always traveling and that wherever he went he spoke the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, created faith in the faithless, and transformed the low-grade persons of Kali-yuga into pure Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, in addition to his selfless, compassionate traveling, was also offering volumes of transcendental literature. His disciples in sixty-five centers around the world were gratefully accepting their role of assisting him, assuring him that they were able to preach to the people in their areas and that he should feel confident to go on opening new frontiers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and presenting more and more transcendental literature. His disciples especially wanted him to have time for translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, because he had told them that that was his desire. Often he said that if he could simply spend time translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam he would stop traveling. He could not stop traveling for very long, however. Even if he found enough peace and a suitable place for concentrating on the Bhāgavatam, duty would call; again he would have to travel—to see new people, to introduce saṅkīrtana in a new place, to insure that his movement was progressing smoothly.

Prabhupāda, therefore, had developed a routine of translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam anywhere he went, for at least a few hours a day. He had a briefcase with Sanskrit Bhāgavatams and commentaries and a suitcase with a dictating machine. Wherever he was, he would rise in the middle of the night, sit at his desk with his dictating machine and Sanskrit and Bengali volumes, and take up where he had left off, translating the verses into English and composing his Bhaktivedanta purports. Thus his busy traveling and his translating were able to go on simultaneously.

SPL 36: In Every Town and Village

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

In Every Town and Village

= London

August 1971

From Florida, "this remote corner of the world," Prabhupāda returned to New York and after three days flew to London. There he became ill. On August 14 he wrote to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa,

I am sick here since the last four days. There is no sunshine. Almost always there is darkness and rain. So it has affected my health, because I am already rheumatic.

Prabhupāda said he wanted to retire from traveling and management: "This body is old, it is giving warning." But he didn't have sufficient confidence that his leading managers could push on—without his pushing them.

Prabhupāda complained to his secretary, Śyāmasundara, criticizing him and the other zonal secretaries for not producing and distributing his books on a large scale. "Why are there no books?" Prabhupāda demanded, and Śyāmasundara cringed, unable to give a satisfactory answer. Śyāmasundara said he would immediately write to his Godbrothers on the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

"Why have a book trust?" Prabhupāda argued. "What have they done? There is no stock of big books.* There are no literatures in foreign languages after years of promises and plans. Why hasn't the unabridged Bhagavad-gītā As It Is been printed yet?"

"Well," Śyāmasundara replied, "because they..."

"No! It's your responsibility," Prabhupāda yelled. "Why haven't you done it?" Prabhupāda chastised his G.B.C. secretaries around the world through the one secretary before him. The G.B.C.'s duties were to see that Prabhupāda's books were always in stock, that Back to Godhead magazine was being published regularly, that accounts were being paid regularly, and that the devotional life in the temples was healthy.

"Our business is how to expand," said Prabhupāda, "—how to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness into educational circles. Let any philosopher, scientist, or educationist come—we have got enough stock. But this sleeping, this leisurely work will not do. They can learn activity from an old man like me, because my determination is like this: If I die working, it is a great credit. Just like a marshal, if he dies on the battlefield, it is his credit. Arjuna was told, "Even if you die, you are still the gainer."

"This slow process of printing is the most condemned position. Why should I go on translating when you cannot print? You say, "Retire and translate.' But why should I translate? No one will ever see it! I can give you volumes. There is Dai Nippon, who will print in Japan on credit, so why don't you print? Always, "It is to be done. It is to be done.' That's all. And big men complaining, "Either he goes or I go.'

"This restlessness, this diversion has to stop. When the father is providing, it is the duty of the son to serve. I am the father. I am giving you everything. Why don't you serve me by printing these books? If one book only is read and understood, that is sufficient to make him Kṛṣṇa conscious. Don't you see how important it is?

"They are always asking me, "Is such-and-such book bona fide?' They can't even take the time to read one of my books, and still they ask for one of my Godbrothers' books. How will things go on?

First Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is not even edited or corrected, what to speak of printed. So many books unprinted. So tell them: From the book fund not a farthing should be for eating."

One day Advaita, the manager of ISKCON Press, called from New York with some good news: in a week they would be sending Dai Nippon the negatives for five big books. ISKCON Press had also sent a shipment of the German Īsopaniṣad to Europe. And other foreign-language books were forthcoming. Prabhupāda was pleased, and Śyāmasundara informed his G.B.C. Godbrothers.

Needless to say, this was just the medicine required to treat Prabhupāda's slackening faith in us. Things are looking up, but still Prabhupāda encourages us all to write up these reports and get a clear all-around picture of the total book situation.

Although Prabhupāda's health was still weak, he felt heartened to hear that his books were being printed, and he continued with his translation and commentary of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Raṇacora: One night I was up very late, one o'clock in the morning. As I came in I saw that Prabhupāda's lights were on in his front room, and I could hear his voice speaking into the dictating machine. I came up the stairs, being as quiet as I possibly could so Prabhupāda wouldn't know that I was up so late. But as I passed his door I couldn't resist the temptation to just stop and listen for a while. I tried looking through the keyhole, but I couldn't see anything. So I just listened to Prabhupāda's voice as he was dictating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Then all of a sudden he stopped. I supposed he was just thinking about what he was going to say next. But then I got the feeling that he knew I was out there, listening through the door. I became frightened and went up the stairs as quietly as I could, although the stairs creaked. Everyone was asleep—not only the temple, but practically the whole city of London—at one o'clock in the morning. But Prabhupāda was awake and translating. He had been speaking quietly, but with a voice of great strength and determination. All during the day he was under pressure to organize things and see people, and yet at night, the one time when he could have some peace and quiet, he was up dictating.

In London Prabhupāda began a book on the Western philosophers, beginning with Socrates. Every morning Śyāmasundara would present a synopsis of a major philosophy to Prabhupāda, and for several hours Prabhupāda would discuss the philosopher's major points from the light of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Daily Śyāmasundara was busy transcribing the morning discussions and preparing the next philosopher.

On August 14 Śrīla Prabhupāda observed Janmāṣṭamī, the birthday of Lord Kṛṣṇa. On the next day, Prabhupāda's own seventy-fifth birthday, a paperback book of collected homages by his disciples arrived. Many of the Vyāsa-pūjā homages praised Śrīla Prabhupāda for his extensive traveling to deliver fallen souls all over the world and for the vast scope of his merciful preaching.

This year you have been traveling to India personally speaking and managing ISKCON and showing us the meaning of ācārya by example. And now you are traveling and inspiring the devotees and centers in the U.S. and Europe.

At Vyās Pūjā time we, your intimate children, are gathered at your feet to tell you our feelings as best we can. By your blessing, we can go forth from this Vyās Pūjā gathering of 1971 and, all devotees together as one great ISKCON, without faction, truly perform the work with our thoughts, words, and deeds. Let us go and distribute this literature of Śrīla Prabhupāda's—Kṛṣṇa's message—kindly delivered to the Western countries. Let us cooperate without ill feelings among ourselves. Let us very strictly observe all the regulative principles and stay as pure representatives. Let us celebrate pure saṅkīrtana and magazine distribution to please you. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda!

All your disciples pray that you will remain in our presence for many years to come, and by our cooperation you will be able to spend time writing volumes of Bhāgavatam while we carry on the program and mission of your Guru Mahārāja.

Prabhupāda's ill health continued.

I was sick for four or five days; now I am a little better but the disease is prolonging in a different way. I cannot sleep at night more than 2 hours and during the day sometimes I am feeling some dizziness. Otherwise everything is all right. I am chanting Hare Krishna as usual and writing my books regularly.

Śyāmasundara: Aravinda and I were sleeping right outside of Prabhupāda's room. I was on a lower bunk bed, and I heard “Śyāmasundara.” It was a really urgent sound, and I woke up so hard that I hit my head on the bunk above. I ran into Prabhupāda's room. As I was opening the door, he collapsed in the doorway. I caught him. He felt so light, like a little doll, and his face was gray. I took him over to his bed and thought, “Oh, my God, what's going on?”

He was shivering. I turned the electric heater way up and put it next to his bed. I covered him with a lot of blankets and waited. He was just still. His eyes were closed.

Finally he said, “Śyāmasundara, go get me some black pepper.” He described how to make a black pepper paste. “Rub it on my forehead,” he said. So I ran down to the kitchen and prepared it and came up and put it on his head. I asked him, “Are you... what's wrong?” I don't believe he made a response. He closed his eyes and appeared to be asleep.

I slept there by him on the floor for a while. At some point in the night, he said, “You may go back to your room. I'll be all right.” He stayed in bed until about eight or nine o'clock the next morning. And then he was just completely well, like nothing had happened. His spirit was so strong that although he had encountered devastating blows to his body, he had come right out of it. I could tell it wasn't a physical event. He had made a full recovery from what must have been something close to death.

* * *

One day while meeting with an Indian man, a Mr. R. B. Pandya from Mombassa, East Africa, Prabhupāda mentioned his illness. Mr. Pandya said he owned a house on the ocean at Mombassa, where it was always sunny and warm, with pleasant sea breezes—a perfect place for Prabhupāda to recover his health. Mr. Pandya invited Prabhupāda to go and live there as long as he liked. Taking

the offer seriously, Prabhupāda began to think of going to Africa—not only for health, but for preaching. Three months ago he had sent Brahmānanda Swami and Jagannivāsa to East Africa, so a visit there would encourage them as well as enable Prabhupāda to work personally at expanding the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement on the African continent. Prabhupāda sent Bhavānanda and Nara-Nārāyaṇa from London to Mombassa to see if it would really be possible for him to stay there as Mr. Pandya had suggested.

When Bhavānanda and Nara-Nārāyaṇa arrived, Brahmānanda Swami, who had been struggling in East Africa with only one assistant, was delighted to see them and to hear that Prabhupāda was coming soon. Previously, Brahmānanda Swami had been preaching in Florida, and Prabhupāda had written him to go to Pakistan. Immediately he had gone, along with one assistant, Jagannivāsa, flying to Paris and then taking the Orient Express through Eastern Europe. On hearing that war fever was building in Pakistan, Prabhupāda had sent a second letter to Brahmānanda Swami in Florida, advising him not to go to Pakistan. But Brahmānanda Swami had never received the letter. Enroute to Pakistan, while holding public kīrtana in Turkey, Brahmānanda and Jagannivāsa had been arrested and detained for several days on suspicion of being Christian missionaries.

Finally, Brahmānanda and Jagannivāsa had arrived in Pakistan, where students had spit at them, accused them of being spies, threatened them, and called them names. Several times people on the street had rubbed the Vaiṣṇava tilaka off the devotees' foreheads and warned them not to show themselves in public or they would be stabbed. Local Hindus had warned the devotees to leave as soon as possible, and so they had reluctantly decided to go to Bombay to see Prabhupāda.

Meanwhile, in Bombay Prabhupāda had read in an Indian newspaper that Pakistani soldiers in Dacca had killed four Hare Kṛṣṇa missionaries. "I am very much anxious to know about Brahmānanda," Prabhupāda had written. "The day has been full of anxiety with this bad news, and still it is going on."

When Śrīla Prabhupāda had heard that Brahmānanda Swami had actually arrived in Bombay, he had asked to see him at once. Like a father recovering his lost child, Prabhupāda had embraced him. "You risked your life just on my order," Prabhupāda had said. After some days Prabhupāda had told Brahmānanda Swami, "You should go to Africa. If you go, then we will be on all the continents."

Now, after preaching in Africa, Brahmānanda Swami eagerly awaited the visit of his beloved spiritual master.

* * *

Nairobi

September 9, 1971

As Śrīla Prabhupāda disembarked in Nairobi from the East African Airlines 747 jet, he wore a wool cādar over his shoulders and carried the same white vinyl attache case he had taken with him all over the world. Flanked by his secretary and servant, he walked with his cane across the airfield

toward the terminal building. Inside, he sat on a cloth-covered chair and joined in the kīrtana, while Indians and Africans gathered around to watch.

Kul Bhusana, a journalist and friend of Brahmānanda Swami's, approached Prabhupāda with questions. He asked Prabhupāda what he had come to teach, and Prabhupāda answered, "Modern civilized man has forgotten his relationship with Kṛṣṇa, or God, and is therefore suffering. Whether you are Hindu, Muslim, or Buddhist, that doesn't matter. Unless you reestablish your relationship with God, you cannot be happy."

"Have you come only for Hindus?" asked Mr. Bhusana.

"No," Prabhupāda replied, "for everyone."

Mr. Bhusana: "East Africa, especially Kenya, is one of those countries which enjoys a great amount of racial harmony in brotherhood of man. What is your special message you can bring to Kenya?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "That brotherhood of man can be complete when they are in God consciousness. Otherwise, it will again break."

Mr. Bhusana: "So your disciples will be making special efforts to reach the Africans rather than confine themselves to the Hindus? That is very important here in this country."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Our method is the same. But the method is so powerful that it appeals to everyone. We do not have to convey a new method for a new place. The method is the same—universal. It will appeal to everyone."

After spending one night in Nairobi, Prabhupāda and his party flew the next day in a small propeller aircraft to Mombassa. Mr. Pandya was away, and his family, although not very enthusiastic, opened their home to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The large house was of contemporary design, with rounded corners, porthole windows, and a spacious living room with a veranda facing the ocean.

Prabhupāda, standing by the window in his room, beheld an aquamarine sea, a cloudless blue sky, and a white sandy beach fringed with palms. Turning back toward Brahmānanda Swami and the others, he said, "Brahmānanda told me that this was one of the most beautiful places in the world. Now I see he is correct."

Prabhupāda had come with a chronic cough, but walking on the beach and relaxing in the Mombassa sunshine, he soon recovered his health. Prabhupāda maintained his program begun in London of daily dialogues with Śyāmasundara concerning the Western philosophers. Chronologically he had proceeded from Socrates to Descartes.

Śyāmasundara: "He is saying, 'I think, therefore I am.' First of all, he has discovered that 'I am.' This was his innate basis for truth. In his time there was no real authority."

Prabhupāda: “But this is not big knowledge. Long, long ago there were many who could understand ‘I am.’ This is called *ātmānam manyate jagat*: a fool thinks all others are fools. He is not the first man to realize the identification of the self. Kṛṣṇa says *aham*. *Aham evāsam evāgre*: ‘I existed in the beginning, and when everything is finished, I shall continue to exist.’ This we also say. ‘I existed before this body was created, and I shall exist when the body is annihilated.’ This conception of I is there in God; it is in me. Then where is the new thing?

As soon as he felt better, he was ready to preach. Mombassa, he said, was a small place, and Nairobi, the capital, would be better for preaching. So he returned to Nairobi.

Nairobi

September 18, 1971

In Nairobi Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrated how a *sannyāsī* should preach. For one month he strictly followed Vedic tradition by staying only three days or less in the home of each of his Indian hosts. Then, although his hosts always provided him good food and comfortable accommodations, he would move on to the next place. This was the rule for *sannyāsīs*, Prabhupāda said; it kept them from becoming attached to bodily comforts and from inconveniencing their hosts.

For Śrīla Prabhupāda to practice these rudimentary lessons of *sannyāsa* was, of course, unnecessary, for he was a *paramahansa*, a *sannyāsī* in the highest order of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His body, mind, and words being totally engaged in Kṛṣṇa's transcendental service, he was automatically detached from material comforts. Nevertheless, he followed the Vedic system, just to instruct his disciples by his example. He was following the system of *madhukarī*—named for the bee, which takes only a little pollen from a flower and then goes on to the next. This system of brief visits also enabled Prabhupāda to involve more families in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to honor the abundance of invitations.

Wherever Prabhupāda went, he was undisputably the guru, the venerable *sādhu*. Yet he would deal intimately with his hosts, developing friendships and behaving practically like an elder member of the family. His hosts would offer him the best room in their home, usually their own bedroom, and the lady of the house, along with her assistants, would cook elaborate meals. Prabhupāda's natural Kṛṣṇa conscious bearing was commanding, and his behavior was always aristocratic; yet his hosts were charmed by his humility. Quickly he was becoming the friend and Vaiṣṇava guru of many families in Nairobi.

Prabhupāda's behavior in Nairobi was instructive for the few Western disciples who accompanied him. On one occasion a Mr. Devaji Dhamji invited Prabhupāda to bless the temple room in his home. Prabhupāda entered, and Mr. Dhamji offered him a deerskin to sit on. “We do not sit on deerskin,” Prabhupāda said. “It is pure, but our Vaiṣṇavas don't wear them or sit on them. That is for the *yogīs*.”

Bhavananda: Mr. Dhamji invited Prabhupāda to sit on a sofa, which had been covered by a clean white cloth. Prabhupāda sat down, and they bathed his feet. This was the first time I ever saw anyone bathe Prabhupāda's feet. They bathed his feet with milk and then with water and rose

petals. Then they put candana on his feet, then red kuṅkuma powder, rice powder, and jasmine flowers. His toes were red from kuṅkuma, and grains of rice and little white jasmine flowers just stayed on his feet. And then he gave a talk. I had never noticed the guru's feet up until that time. That was the first time I realized that the feet of the guru are special. And they are astoundingly beautiful.

Prabhupāda wasn't satisfied preaching only to the Indians. He wanted to preach to the Africans. Indians and Africans were completely segregated. But since a Kṛṣṇa conscious person does not make distinctions based on the body, Prabhupāda said the Indians had a duty to share their spiritual culture with the Africans.

Prabhupāda impressed on Brahmānanda Swami that his first duty in Africa was to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the Africans. Because of bad experience in Turkey and Pakistan, Brahmānanda Swami had been reluctant to hold public kīrtanas in Nairobi. Besides, the Africans spoke mostly Swahili; they were culturally different and usually too poor to buy books, so Brahmānanda Swami didn't know how to preach to them effectively. Going to the Indians had been easy and natural.

But Prabhupāda wanted the Africans. "It is an African country," he said simply. "They are the proprietors. We should be preaching to them."

As with everything else in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda demonstrated how to do this also. He got the use of a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in a predominantly African downtown area. The temple had a hall with doors opening onto the busy street, and Prabhupāda instructed the devotees to hold kīrtana in the hall, keeping the doors open. The devotees did as he asked, and in five minutes the hall began filling up with people. It was a shabby area of town, and the people who entered were illiterate and dirty. But they were curious, and they happily joined in the kīrtana, smiling, clapping, and dancing.

Brahmānanda Swami left the hall and went to the nearby house where Prabhupāda was staying. "The place is filled with people," Brahmānanda Swami said, "but it's not necessary for you to come. We can carry on and do the program ourselves."

"No," Prabhupāda said, "I must go."

Brahmānanda Swami tried to discourage him.

"No, I must go," Prabhupāda repeated. "Are you going to take me?"

When Brahmānanda Swami arrived with Śrīla Prabhupāda, the hall was even more crowded than it had been a few minutes before. Prabhupāda, in his silken saffron robes, appeared effulgent as he entered the dingy, poorly lit auditorium. As he walked the crowd parted, leaving an aisle for him to pass among them, and they watched him curiously. Onstage Prabhupāda led a kīrtana and lectured. Although the Swahili-speaking audience was unable to understand Prabhupāda's lecture, the people were respectful. And the kīrtana they loved.

Members of the Indian community had been apprehensive of Prabhupāda's opening their hall to the Africans, and some of them had attended to see what would happen. Observing Prabhupāda's compassionate program, however, the Indians were impressed. Such an apparently simple program had the spiritual potency to erase cultural boundaries.

This should be Brahmānanda Swami's mission in Africa, Prabhupāda insisted—offering Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the Africans. And the program should be simple: distributing prasādam, distributing free books, and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with drums and karatālas. Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not be just another Nairobi Hindu religious society. The Hindus should take part by donating money, but Brahmānanda Swami's preaching and recruiting should be among the Africans.

When several black American disciples joined Prabhupāda in Nairobi, Prabhupāda told them, “Four hundred years ago your ancestors were taken away from here as slaves. But ah, just see how you have returned as masters!”

Prabhupāda also organized Nairobi's first outdoor kīrtana performance. The devotees went to Kamakunji Park's largest tree, a historical landmark connected with Kenyan independence. As they stood chanting beneath the tree, a large crowd gathered, and many began chanting. Some even danced in a sort of tribal shuffle. One young man stepped forward and offered to translate Brahmānanda Swami's speech into Swahili. The devotees distributed sweet bundi, and the people in the crowd really enjoyed themselves. The whole affair was a great success.

Rushing back to Prabhupāda, Brahmānanda Swami reported on the wonderful kīrtana in the park. Brahmānanda felt the same emotion as in 1966 when he had reported to Prabhupāda the success of the first kīrtana at Washington Square Park in New York City. Now, as then, Brahmānanda Swami had followed Prabhupāda's instructions, and the results had been successful. Prabhupāda, by his personal example and by his pushing Brahmānanda Swami, had within a few days changed the emphasis of preaching in Africa—from Indians to Africans.

The night of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lecture at the University of Nairobi, two thousand African students filled the auditorium, with hundreds more standing outside to look in through the doors and windows. First Prabhupāda had Bhūta-bhāvana, a black American disciple, deliver a short introduction, using some borrowed Swahili phrases. “Harambay,” he began—which means “Welcome, brothers. Let us work together.” Then Prabhupāda spoke.

“The whole world is simply hankering and lamenting. You African people are now hankering to be like the Europeans and Americans. But the Europeans have lost their empire. They are now lamenting. So one party is hankering, and one party is lamenting...

“We have come to these African countries to invite all intelligent Africans to come and understand this philosophy and distribute it. You are trying to develop yourselves, so develop very soundly. But don't imitate the Americans and Europeans, who are living like cats and dogs. Such civilization will not stand. The atom bomb is already there. As soon as the next war breaks out, all the skyscraper buildings and everything else will be finished. Try to understand from the real standpoint, the real

view of human life. That is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and we request you to come and try to understand this philosophy. Thank you very much."

The audience burst into applause, giving Prabhupāda a standing ovation. This response proved once again that Kṛṣṇa's message spoke to the heart; it was for all people, regardless of their political, geographic, or social predicament. When Prabhupāda had first landed at the Nairobi airport, he had assured the reporter that he would be preaching to the Africans. And now he was. He was delivering to the Africans the same message and the same process of devotional service he had delivered to the Americans. What the Americans wanted and what the Africans wanted could be realized only in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa consciousness would work anywhere, if sincere and intelligent persons would only come forward and help distribute it.

Prabhupāda continued with outside speaking engagements. While appearing on the popular TV show Mambo Leo, Prabhupāda displayed a painting of Lord Caitanya dancing and chanting with His devotees. The interviewer asked Prabhupāda why only Caucasians appeared to be in the picture. "Well, there are many colors in India," Prabhupāda replied.

"And who is the central figure here?" the interviewer asked.

"This is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu," Prabhupāda replied. "He is God."

"He cannot be God!" the large, burly interviewer retorted. "What do you mean He is God? This is a human being."

But Prabhupāda became even more aggressive than the interviewer. "Why do you say He cannot come as a human being? Why God cannot come as a human being?"

In another of his many Nairobi lectures, Prabhupāda stressed that peace was possible only on the spiritual platform. Kṛṣṇa consciousness alone would unite the present factions.

"For instance, in Africa the Indians may be satisfied with their own methods, but the Africans are not satisfied. So if one is dissatisfied in material life, then another is satisfied—and there will be disturbance. But if you come to the Kṛṣṇa conscious platform, if you engage yourself in the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Personality of God head, then your mind and soul will be fully satisfied."

Prabhupāda went on to explain his plans for helping Africans.

"We have come to Africa to educate the people—not only Indians or the Hindus, but also the native people, the local population. I am glad that our people are going to sankīrtana party in the streets, as we go everywhere—in London, in New York, and all the big cities of the world. We are trying to lead our sankīrtana parties through the streets, and the local African boys and girls and gentlemen are gathering. They are receiving this movement.

"So there is every possibility of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere. This movement has come here, so I request that those who are present try to cooperate with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness

movement. And I am sure that the African boys and girls will take part in it, as you have experienced. We have a great many African boys and girls as our students in America, so there is no difficulty.

"It is not that because one is very busy, therefore he cannot serve God. Or that because one is poor, or black, or white, that he cannot serve God. No. Anyone who takes to the process of pure devotional service will never be checked."

Prabhupāda also asked his audience to help the devotees establish a center in Nairobi.

"We must have a place to stay. Unless we stay, how can we prosecute the movement? Therefore, help us immediately. Give us a place and see how things improve. You have already tested this movement and found that it has been successful all over the world. Why not in Africa? We are not a sectarian group. We don't consider whether one is African or American."

In Nairobi Prabhupāda heard of a new law in Tanzania that after ten years all private property would automatically become the property of the state and that the owner would be entitled to only a ten-percent reimbursement. This was a typical Kali-yuga law, Prabhupāda remarked. The state passes a law with no reasoning and no benefit for the people. The state should protect the people, Prabhupāda said. In Vedic history, during the misrule of the demoniac king Vena, the sages and brāhmaṇas had become very disturbed and had punished him; the sādhus' duty was to make sure the kings ruled justly. But today, nowhere in the world were political affairs in order. There was no sane philosophy to guide society.

"We must begin to interfere," Prabhupāda urged his disciples. "Now we are five hundred men, and we each have fifty years. So think of what we can do. But you must become dedicated as I am. Sometimes a Vaiṣṇava is criticized as doing nothing. But Arjuna and Hanuman were Vaiṣṇava warriors. When the high-court judges wear tilaka, then we are successful—my Guru Mahārāja said that. My Godbrothers were for getting temples, some rice, eating a little, chanting. But for us—first we work, then samādhi."

The word samādhi technically refers to a state of trance, in which one is completely absorbed in Kṛṣṇa and forgets the material world and all material desires. Generally, samādhi is thought of in terms of secluded meditation; a highly advanced yogī goes to a solitary, peaceful place and meditates or chants constantly. But Prabhupāda demonstrated by his life's example that the world situation was too urgent for a devotee to retire and meditate. Rather, a devotee should labor hard to increase the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This would benefit both the devotee and the masses. Prabhupāda's disciples, therefore, as servants of their spiritual master, should work now; and later, perhaps in old age and spiritual maturity, they could retire to a holy place to constantly chant and hear about Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda emphasized work. Yet what was that work? At least for Śrīla Prabhupāda, propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness was samādhi itself. Samādhi didn't have to be limited to sitting in a solitary place. The full meaning of samādhi implied complete absorption in the loving service of Kṛṣṇa, with the senses, mind, and intelligence fixed in trance. Thus in samādhi one could be active—traveling, preaching, distributing Back to Godhead magazines, chanting in the streets. If a devotee

always thought of Kṛṣṇa and worked on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, then he was the topmost yogī. This had also been Lord Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna: "Remember Me, and at the same time fight." Śrīla Prabhupāda was the emblem of active samādhi—always hearing about, glorifying, and remembering Kṛṣṇa, and always fighting as a soldier on behalf of Lord Caitanya.

Prabhupāda's preaching in Nairobi had been especially active. He had established Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a new city, setting the example for Brahmānanda Swami to emulate, showing the standard for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the continent. And Śyāmasundara was keeping his G.B.C. Godbrothers informed of Prabhupāda's amazing activities.

The pace has been lightning fast, and His Divine Grace is opening up yet another vast theater of operations. The people are thronging with curiosity and serious questions...

Prabhupāda, after finishing one late-night preaching marathon, asked for food and remarked, "You see, I am hungry. Keep me talking—that is my life. Don't let me stop talking..."

But Nairobi was only one city in one country on one continent, and Prabhupāda's desire was to see Kṛṣṇa consciousness in every city, town, and village in the world. How could he do it in one lifetime—traveling to every city in the world, printing and distributing books in every language, constructing fabulous temples? He couldn't. But he wanted to do as much as possible in whatever time Kṛṣṇa allotted to him, to insure that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would survive. He criticized the politicians' typical attitude that unless they themselves remained active everything they had worked for would crumble. Such politicians were always reluctant to retire, preferring to remain in office until their last breath. Prabhupāda, however, had no personal ambition, and he knew that results were awarded by Kṛṣṇa. As a true sannyāsī, he had renounced the world and worldly ambition. But he had not become lazy.

He was executing his mission at an advanced age, and Lord Kṛṣṇa was rewarding his attempts. Prabhupāda, therefore, in a mood of reciprocating with Kṛṣṇa, kept working to expand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Knowing that Lord Kṛṣṇa wanted the world flooded with love of God, Śrīla Prabhupāda had earnestly tried to do it, beginning in a storefront in New York City. And Kṛṣṇa had responded, sending him a few men and enough money to pay the rent. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda had attempted to do more, and again Kṛṣṇa had responded. Thus a second ISKCON center and a third and a fourth and more had sprung up, and book printing had begun. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his mood of loving reciprocation with Kṛṣṇa, just kept attempting more and more.

Now it was no longer simply one person's work; Śrīla Prabhupāda was entrusting the work to his disciples. And those disciples, if they were actually to help, would have to adopt Prabhupāda's selfless dedication.

As they tried to follow him in his expansive plans, however, their minds faltered. For a handful of devotees to maintain even one temple in one city was a big job, yet Prabhupāda was doing this a hundred times over. He wanted the movement he had started to continue for thousands of years, and he was confident that as long as his followers remained pure, working within the guidelines he had given, they would be successful.

Although the present age of Kali was the worst of all ages, in which people had little or no interest in spiritual life, Prabhupāda had faith in the past ācāryas' predictions that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was destined to enter a golden age of worldwide influence. True, it was the worst of times; yet by the influence of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa it would become the best of times. The chanting of the holy name was the religion of the age; the people of Kali-yuga could find deliverance simply in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's activities show he was empowered by Kṛṣṇa. This is evident from his childhood, when at the age of five he held a Ratha-yātrā festival, and it is certainly evident from these years, 1968 to 1971, when he actively expanded his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Prabhupāda compared ISKCON to the Varāha incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, who at first had been no bigger than a thumb but had quickly expanded to half the size of the universe.

ISKCON's rapid growth was not simply due to rapid communications and modern travel, nor to its founder-ācārya's material organizational abilities. Prabhupāda, judged materially, was not a likely person to conduct a worldwide movement, to travel vigorously, to write volumes of books, and to train thousands of disciples on every continent. He was satisfied with a simple, regulated life, and he disdained all such cultural items as music, fashion, sports, politics, art, food—anything not related to Kṛṣṇa. He worked and traveled out of an intense desire to benefit the world with real culture, to implant spiritual culture in what to him was the desert of a materialistic society.

Therefore, accepting that Prabhupāda was not materialistically ambitious, we can understand his proclivity for worldwide propaganda and dissemination of a spiritual movement as entirely transcendental. He was acting solely to carry out the desires of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīla Prabhupāda saw himself as a servant of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, whose message he was carrying. That message, which was also the message of Lord Kṛṣṇa, had come down through disciplic succession: "We are all spiritual souls, eternal servants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. We have now fallen into forgetfulness and are suffering birth after birth in this material world. By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, we can revive our lost relationship with God."

With Prabhupāda's first success in America, a few of his Godbrothers in India had minimized his work. Bhaktivedānta Swami, they had said, happened to have a temperament suited to mixing with lower-class Western youth. The fact, however, as Prabhupāda's own experience testified, was that the young people among whom he preached were not particularly receptive, nor had he arrived timely and welcomed, simply to discourse on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to throngs of submissive disciples. He had been successful because of his great patience, tolerance, and compassion.

It was not, therefore, the advent of the jet plane (although Prabhupāda gladly took advantage of it), nor was it happenstance, nor luck, nor even a social or historical phenomenon that enabled Śrīla Prabhupāda to spread Vedic culture from East to West and back again. No. It was the will of Kṛṣṇa and the sincerity of His servant.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta states that unless one is possessed of kṛṣṇa-śakti, special power from God, one cannot propagate the chanting of the holy name.

kali-kālera dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma saṅkīrtana

kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana

“The fundamental religious system in the age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the saṅkīrtana movement.” (Cc. Antya. 7.11) This verse describing Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu also describes Lord Caitanya's servant, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Had Śrīla Prabhupāda not been empowered by Kṛṣṇa, he could not have inspired so many people to accept the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

According to Vedic literature, when a person has extraordinary spiritual endowment, kṛṣṇa-śakti, he is known as a śaktyāveśa-avatāra. Although the word avatāra generally refers to incarnations of God Himself, the term śaktyāveśa-avatāra refers to an individual empowered by God to enact the mission of God in this world.

Śaktyāveśa-avatāras and their particular functions are mentioned in the Vedic literature. For example, the emperor Pṛthu possessed the śakti for God conscious administration; the four Kumāras possessed the śakti of transcendental knowledge; and Nārada Muni possessed the śakti of devotional service. Lord Buddha, whose name and activities are described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, is also a śaktyāveśa-avatāra, and even other divinely empowered personalities outside the Vedic culture, such as Jesus Christ and Muhammad, are accepted by Vaiṣṇava ācāryas as śaktyāveśa-avatāras.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's activities during the years 1968 through 1971 establish him as a śaktyāveśa-avatāra, and he fulfills the predictions of the scriptures.

pr̥thivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma

sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma

“In all the villages and towns all over the world, everywhere, the saṅkīrtana movement of Lord Caitanya will be preached.”

Even from the viewpoint of religious history, Prabhupāda's preaching was a fulfillment of the mission of Lord Caitanya, who had appeared in West Bengal about five hundred years before Kṛṣṇa consciousness came West. The Vedic literature and the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas concur that Lord Caitanya is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa Himself, appearing in this age as a pure devotee of the Lord. And just as Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared with His plenary expansion Lord Balarāma, Lord Caitanya appeared with Lord Balarāma's incarnation for Kali-yuga, Lord Nityānanda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda can be appreciated not only generally, as the empowered representative of God, but specifically, as the manifestation of Lord Nityānanda. According to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself to the souls of ordinary men through Lord Nityānanda.

The individual soul requires the help of God to realize God. This help comes by the causeless mercy of Lord Nityānanda, who is therefore known as the original guru. Although Lord Nityānanda is the direct expansion of Lord Caitanya, His pastime is to serve Lord Caitanya by redeeming the fallen souls.

Lord Nityānanda and His representative, the spiritual master, do not alter the scriptures or the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa but make them more accessible and understandable. Lord Caitanya commissioned Lord Nityānanda to preach the holy name at everyone's door, and Lord Nityānanda's exemplary mood of vigorous, compassionate preaching was also the mood of Śrīla Prabhupāda. As Śrīla Prabhupāda imparted this mood to his disciples, they in turn went out into the streets of cities around the world to distribute to everyone the mercy of the holy name of God.

Lord Nityānanda is especially renowned for saving two drunkard brothers, Jagāi and Mādhāi, even though they had assaulted Him when He had attempted to bless them with the holy name. In Lord Nityānanda's time, Prabhupāda on several occasions explained, there were only one Jagāi and Mādhāi, but now the whole world is filled with Jagāis and Mādhāis. And Prabhupāda was recruiting his disciples from these Jagāis and Mādhāis. Śrīla Prabhupāda fully displayed Lord Nityānanda's compassion in taking all risks and freely giving the holy name.

Even Lord Nityānanda Himself, during His appearance in India, did not approach as many fallen souls as Śrīla Prabhupāda, nor did He approach souls in such degraded conditions of life or in so many rejected parts of the world. But He has done so now, through His representative Śrīla Prabhupāda. As the recipient of the combined mercy of Gaura-Nitāi (Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda), Śrīla Prabhupāda blessed the world with love of God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, never described himself as a great empowered personality, either in public or among his disciples. But he stressed that he was in disciplic succession, carrying the authorized knowledge. And he encouraged his disciples to take the same position: "We want to create many pure devotees, so that other people will benefit by their association. In this way, the number of pure devotees increases."

Prabhupāda knew well that propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not a professional business. Although in India many professionals spoke or wrote on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to earn their livelihood, they could not convert materialistic people to devotional service. Only a pure devotee could change the materialistic heart.

Prabhupāda did not even conclude that he was a pure devotee, only that he was the servant of a pure devotee, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, his Guru Mahārāja.

Prabhupāda prayed that before he left the world he could create a living family of pure devotees to spread the paramparā teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and protect them from being changed or obscured. He emphasized that all the preachers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement could become pure devotees by following the regulative principles, avoiding sinful life, and regularly chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Only in this way, he said, could the devotees have an effect on others.

October 18, 1971

Having spent a busy five weeks in Africa, Prabhupāda was ready to travel on to India. His plan was to visit Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi. He had made a strong beginning for ISKCON in India—with land in Māyāpur and centers in Bombay, Calcutta, and New Delhi, and he had groups of disciples strategically located in other parts of India. Indians were recognizing ISKCON and appreciating its festivals, kīrtanas, and prasādam. Life members were offering service and being benefited, they were receiving and reading ISKCON publications, and they were helping support the ISKCON centers.

And this was only a start. To get a foothold—anywhere, whether in India, Africa, America, or Russia—was certainly a great accomplishment. But a foothold was not enough. Although much had been done to establish the mission of Lord Caitanya, much more remained to be done. Preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not a job that at some point would be completed.

Of course in one sense it was already complete and perfect. Prabhupāda's preaching had always been successful, even when he had struggled alone in India to make his message heard through Back to Godhead magazine, the League of Devotees, and his translations of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He had always remained fixed in the transcendental order of his spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa; therefore, he had been successful. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was already complete, and now, by the will of its author, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this completeness was becoming manifest. But the work, the ecstasy, the samādhi of selflessly and single-pointedly serving that mission was unending and ever unfolding. Now there was a foothold in Africa. Tomorrow he would fly to Bombay, where Kṛṣṇa had already allowed him a foothold. And, as Kṛṣṇa desired, he would continue to travel and to send his devotees and his books and his message until he reached every town and village in the world.

SPL 37: The Land Is Yours

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

The Land Is Yours

= Calcutta

March 1971

It was midnight. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat on a pillow behind his low desk, his light the only one on in the building. All the other devotees were in bed. On the desk before him rested the dictating machine and a volume of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam with Bengali commentary. A small framed picture of his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, sat between two small vases of roses and asters. On the floor beyond the desk was the broad mat covered with white cotton fabric, where a few hours before, devotees and guests had sat.

But now he was alone. Although usually he retired at ten, rising three or four hours later to translate, tonight he had not rested, and his Bhāgavatam lay closed, his dictating machine covered.

He had sent two of his disciples, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Bali-mardana, to purchase land in Māyāpur. Six days had passed, however, and still they had neither returned nor sent word. He had told them not to return until they had completed the transaction, but six days was more than enough time. He was anxious, thinking constantly of his two disciples.

A breeze arrived, carrying the fragrance of nīm trees through the open window. The night was becoming cool, and Prabhupāda wore a light cādar around his shoulders. Absorbed in thought, leaning against the white bolster pillow, he paid little attention to the familiar sights in his room. A clay jug with drinking water sat beside him, and a potted tulasī plant sat upon a small wooden pedestal. The electricity, off most of the day and night, was now on, and moths and other insects hovered around the bare bulb overhead. A lizard patrolled the ceiling, occasionally darting forward near the light to capture an insect.

Why were Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Bali-mardana taking so long? It had been more than just a wait of six days; he had been trying to obtain land in Māyāpur for years. And this time the prospects had been excellent. He had clearly instructed Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Bali-mardana, and by now they should have returned. The delay could mean a complication, or even danger.

The land they were trying for was a nine-bīgha plot on Bhaktisiddhānta Road, less than a mile from the birthsite of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The Sek brothers, Muslim farmers who owned the plot, had been asking a high price. Only recently had a Calcutta lawyer familiar with Navadvīpa been able to seriously negotiate a fair price. The Sek brothers had settled for 14,500 rupees, and Prabhupāda had authorized withdrawal of the funds from his bank in Krishnanagar. Thus Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Bali-mardana had left for Māyāpur, while Prabhupāda had remained in Calcutta, carrying on with his affairs but thinking often of the activities of his disciples in Māyāpur. Their mission was very important to him, and he kept them in his mind, personally blessing them with his concern.

Prabhupāda wanted an ISKCON center in Māyāpur; it was a desire that had increased within him as his movement had increased throughout the years. He could easily visit or live in Māyāpur; that was no problem. But he needed a place for his disciples. His spiritual master had ordered him to preach in the West; and now with the success of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness society, the Western Vaiṣṇavas required a center in Māyāpur where they could reside and worship and receive the immense benefit of the holy dhāma. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had stressed the great importance of Māyāpur, and some of his sannyāsī disciples had temples there. Why shouldn't the International Society for Krishna Consciousness also be able to take shelter of Māyāpur?

Since birth, Prabhupāda had been aware of the significance of Lord Caitanya and His dhāma, Śrī Māyāpur. He had grown up in Calcutta, where everyone knew of Lord Caitanya, and because his father, Gour Mohan De, had been a pure devotee of Lord Caitanya, from childhood he had sung the Bengali songs of Gaura-Nitāi and Their pastimes in the land of Gauḍa. He had imbibed deeply the teachings and pastimes of Lord Caitanya, especially after meeting his spiritual master in Calcutta in 1922.

Lord Caitanya had spent His first twenty-four years in Māyāpur and Navadvīpa. Yet since His manifest pastimes there almost five hundred years ago, the places of those pastimes had been

obscured, the Lord's birthsite lost, and His teachings confused and misused. Despite the disciplic line of pure devotees from Lord Caitanya, not until the advent of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the father of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, did Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana movement and pure teachings begin to emerge. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura published many books and preached to reestablish the intellectual, moral, and spiritual integrity of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. He researched and explored the land of Navadvīpa, ascertaining the exact birthsite of the Lord. Citing Vedic evidence, he established that many previous incarnations of Viṣṇu had enacted pastimes in Navadvīpa.

Not only did Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura document Navadvīpa's past glory, but he also foresaw its glorious future, when a religion based on the teachings of Lord Caitanya would emerge and spread throughout the world, and when European and American Vaiṣṇavas would throng to Navadvīpa to join their Bengali brothers in chanting "Jaya Śacīnandana!"* The time would come, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote, when in the land of Navadvīpa on the plain of the Ganges a magnificent temple would arise, proclaiming to the world the glories of Lord Caitanya.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, carrying out the desires of his father and preceptor, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, had formed the Gaudiya Math for propagating the teachings of Lord Caitanya and the glories of Navadvīpa-dhāma. He had induced a wealthy disciple to spend his fortune for erecting a temple at Lord Caitanya's birthsite in Māyāpur, and he had constructed a kīrtana hall commemorating the place of Lord Caitanya's kīrtanas. He had also constructed his own residence in Māyāpur. He had built temples throughout India—sixty-four in all—but because he wanted the English-speaking world especially to take to Lord Caitanya's movement, he had emphasized as first priority the publishing and distributing of Kṛṣṇa conscious literature.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, sitting in his room in the Calcutta temple, shared the great vision of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Yet to enact this great vision he had to take practical steps, and he was content to take them in the most humble way. A devotee should not simply daydream, expecting Kṛṣṇa to accomplish everything with "miracles."

Prabhupāda, however, was not dreaming idly. Working for years alone in India, he had held his plan of going to the West, and Kṛṣṇa had at last fulfilled that desire. In America, in whatever circumstances and with whatever small facility Kṛṣṇa had provided, he had preached. And slowly, step by step, he had met with success, realizing his vision of a worldwide society of devotees. Always he had kept his greater vision in mind, as every step forward had given him deeper satisfaction and had brought him closer to fulfilling his mission.

Prabhupāda sometimes told the story of a poor potter who dreamed of expanding his business and becoming fabulously rich. As the potter slept one night, he dreamed of how much land and how many houses he would have and of how he would have a beautiful wife. When the potter considered that perhaps the wife would quarrel with him, he became angry and said, "If my wife fights with me, I will kick her!" And kicking, he broke the only two pots in his stock and was reduced to nothing.

Whether chanting or writing or reading or preaching, Prabhupāda had been absorbed in his plans for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness and fulfilling the dream of the past ācāryas. Now he was anxious

to complete the next step, and for this he was waiting up past midnight, meditating on his two disciples and their important mission.

As Prabhupāda sat, rapt in thought, the only sounds were the usual sounds of the night: mice within the walls, a brahmācārī snoring on the veranda, and in the distance the night watchman making his rounds, his stick striking the street. There were no cars, and only an occasional wooden ricksha clattered along the potholed street.

Prabhupāda wondered if perhaps his boys had been robbed. Before sending them off, he had shown Tamāla Kṛṣṇa how to carry money around his waist in a makeshift cloth money belt. But it had been a great deal of money, and robberies were not uncommon around Navadvīpa. Or perhaps there had been some other delay. Sometimes in land negotiations involving large sums of money, the court would require that a clerk record the denomination and serial number of every note exchanged. Or perhaps the train had broken down.

Suddenly Prabhupāda heard footsteps on the stairs. Someone opened the outer door and now walked along the veranda just outside. A soft knock.

"Yes, who is it?" Prabhupāda asked. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa entered and prostrated himself before Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"So," Prabhupāda asked, "what is your news?"

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa looked up triumphantly. "The land is yours!"

Prabhupāda leaned back with a sigh. "All right," he said. "Now you can take rest."

* * *

London

August 1971

Prabhupāda had asked the Indian high commissioner for the United Kingdom to petition Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to attend ISKCON's upcoming cornerstone-laying ceremony in Māyāpur. Already Prabhupāda had instructed all his G.B.C. secretaries to attend the ceremony, and he had asked the devotees to invite many prominent citizens of Calcutta. Writing to his disciples in India, he said that if they could not get Indira Gandhi to come, they should at least get the governor of Bengal, Sri S. S. Dhavan.

Meanwhile, Prabhupāda was meeting in London with several of his disciples experienced in architecture and design; he wanted them to draft plans for his Māyāpur project. Nara-Nārāyaṇa had built Ratha-yātrā carts and designed temple interiors, Raṇacora had studied architecture, and Bhavānanda had been a professional designer, but Prabhupāda himself conceived the plans for the Māyāpur buildings. He then told his three-man committee to provide sketches and an architect's

model; he would immediately begin raising funds and securing support in India for the project. To the devotees who heard Prabhupāda's plans, this seemed the most ambitious ISKCON project ever.

While taking his morning walks in Russell Square, Prabhupāda would point to various buildings and ask how high they were. Finally he announced one morning that the main temple in Māyāpur should be more than three hundred feet high! Māyāpur's monsoon floods and sandy soil would create unique difficulties, he said, and the building would have to be built on a special foundation, a sort of floating raft. A civil engineer later confirmed this.

The first building, Prabhupāda said, should be a large guesthouse, four stories high, and his design, although not strictly conforming to any one school of architecture, resembled most that of Rajasthan. He wanted a pink-and-rust colored building with many arches and a wide marble veranda on each floor except the ground floor. The building should run east-west, so that the sun would pass lengthwise over it and not shine directly into the building's broad front. Southerly breezes would cool the guesthouse in summer. The building should be equipped with electric fans and lights, modern toilets and showers, and the rooms should be furnished, spacious, and well ventilated.

This guesthouse should be built as soon as possible, Prabhupāda said; then other buildings would follow. He wanted residential buildings for five hundred devotees, a large prasādam hall seating several thousand, a kitchen complex, and a gośālā (a shelter for the cows that would pasture in nearby fields). In time ISKCON would acquire adjoining land and develop parks, with flower gardens, trees and shrubs, fountains, walkways, and arbors.

The main building, the colossal Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir, was to be no less than three hundred feet high and costing perhaps tens of millions of dollars. Prabhupāda's description astounded the architects as well as the devotees; it sounded grander than the United States Capitol or St. Peter's Cathedral. The temple's central dome would house a three-dimensional model of the universe. The design, however, would be based on the Vedic description and would depict not only the material universe but also the spiritual universe.

Entering the main hall, a person would look up and see the planets situated just as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes, beginning with the hellish planets, then the middle planets, wherein the earth is situated, then the heavenly planets of the demigods, and then Brahmaloka, the highest planet in the material world. Above Brahmaloka, the observer would see the abode of Lord Śiva, and above that the spiritual sky, or brahmajyoti. Within the spiritual effulgence of the brahmajyoti would be the self-illuminating Vaikuṇṭha planets, inhabited by eternally liberated souls. And highest of all would be the supreme planet of Kṛṣṇaloka, where God in His original eternal form enjoys His pastimes with His most confidential devotees.

The temple would also house a miniature palace in which the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa would reside, surrounded by silks and pillars of silver, gold, and jewels. The Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir and the Māyāpur city would be ISKCON's world headquarters.

And why such a fabulous architectural wonder as this in such an obscure part of the world? The answer, Prabhupāda explained, was that Māyāpur was actually not obscure; it seemed so only from

the mundane perspective. To mundane vision, that which was central seemed remote. The soul and the next life seemed remote, while the body and immediate sense gratification seemed central. By establishing the Temple of Human Understanding in Māyāpur, Śrīla Prabhupāda would be directing the materialistic world's attention back to the true center.

Any sincere visitor would be charmed by the beauty of ISKCON's Māyāpur project and would perceive that here indeed was the spiritual world. And the devotees living in Māyāpur, by remaining constantly immersed in singing Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana and discussing the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, would be able to convince any intelligent visitor that the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu were the highest truth. The devotees would explain the philosophy of the Absolute Truth, which would enable visitors to comprehend actual spiritual truth beyond sectarian religious dogma. Furthermore, the continuous Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana and the blissful devotees engaged in a wide variety of services to Lord Kṛṣṇa would demonstrate that bhakti-yoga was the simplest, most direct process for meditating on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. While staying in ISKCON's Māyāpur city, a person would quickly become a devotee of the Lord and begin chanting and dancing in ecstasy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was demonstrating how the world could be spiritualized by linking material things with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, through bhakti-yoga. And why shouldn't such spiritual feats surpass the achievements of the materialists?

Prabhupāda was sorry to learn through the Indian high commissioner that the prime minister could not attend the cornerstone-laying ceremony in Māyāpur. Yet he took it as Kṛṣṇa's desire. He said he would invite a prominent Vaiṣṇava to officiate, or he might do it himself. "On the whole," he wrote, "it was Lord Caitanya's desire that a Vaiṣṇava shall lay down the cornerstone instead of asking some material man or woman to perform the holy work."

The monsoons came, and the Ganges spilled over her banks, flooding the entire ISKCON Māyāpur property. Acyutānanda Swami had built a straw and bamboo hut where Prabhupāda was soon to stay, but the waters rose until Acyutānanda Swami had to live in the bamboo rafters. He wrote Prabhupāda that had it not been for Bhaktisiddhānta Road* the damage would have been extensive. Prabhupāda replied,

Yes, we were saved by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Road. We shall always expect to be saved by His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswami Maharaj Prabhupāda. Always pray to His Lotus Feet. Whatever success we have had in preaching Lord Chaitanya's mission all over the world is only due to His mercy.

* * *

New Delhi

November 10, 1971

The car pulled out from the crowd in front of the airport terminal. Prabhupāda, sitting in the back seat, his bamboo cane against his knee, his hand in his bead bag, talked with his Delhi disciples. As

the car moved through the broad avenues of New Delhi Prabhupāda removed two knee-length flower garlands from around his neck and placed them beside him on the seat. It was midday, and the November climate was pleasant. Prabhupāda had arrived from Calcutta just in time for the ten-day ISKCON paṇḍāl festival, beginning the next day.

One of the devotees mentioned how fitting it had been that the mayor of New Delhi, Mr. Hans Raj Gupta, had greeted Prabhupāda at the airport. Prabhupāda smiled.

In his speech before Mayor Gupta and a gathering at the airport, Prabhupāda had explained India's duty of performing welfare work for the rest of the world. He had also described how, at age twenty-five, he had met his Guru Mahārāja and had then received the order to carry Lord Caitanya's message to the English-speaking world. Explaining why he had waited until he was seventy before going West, he had remarked, "I was trying to become a successful tool for preaching Lord Caitanya's message." Hundreds of thousands of preachers were needed now, as the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was spreading throughout the world. "And the black men are also dancing," Prabhupāda had said. "And they are asking the Indian people, 'Why you and the swamis do not give us this sublime method?' "

Delhi was the third Indian city Prabhupāda had visited since his return from Africa a month ago. His first stop, Bombay, had begun roughly. Śyāmasundara had neglected to carry Śrīla Prabhupāda's inoculation card, so immigration officials had denied Prabhupāda entry into India, quarantining him at the Bombay airport hospital for ten days.

Confined to a suite with an adjoining veranda overlooking a garden, Prabhupāda had resigned himself to a more limited sphere of activity. Still, each morning after breakfast he had conducted a dialogue with Śyāmasundara about certain leading Western philosophers: Śyāmasundara would present a particular philosophy, and Prabhupāda would discuss it in light of the Vedic view. Then, with only one day left before the end of the ten-day quarantine period, the inoculation card had arrived, and Prabhupāda had been released.

Immediately he had left for Calcutta and a series of kīrtana and lecture programs at Desh Priya Park. He had stayed in Calcutta two and a half weeks, appreciating the location of the ISKCON temple at Albert Road in the heart of what had once been the sāhab (European) section. "Now I am bringing the sāhabs back to the sāhab quarter," Prabhupāda had said, "but this time they are all coming as Vaiṣṇavas. You should never give up this place."

Some of the Calcutta devotees had complained to Śrīla Prabhupāda that the temple was being mismanaged and that, due to insufficient income, their diet was inadequate. When Prabhupāda had questioned the temple leaders, one devotee had replied, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, I was simply trying to execute your will."

"Is it my will," Prabhupāda had asked, "that all the devotees should be disturbed?"

He had settled the differences, arranged for an improved diet, and had even recommended a democratic election of temple officers. But he had also explained that because Kṛṣṇa consciousness

was such an important mission, the devotees should cooperate, even if there were discrepancies. The material world is like an ocean, he had said, and there would always be waves.

During this visit to Calcutta, Prabhupāda had also spoken of his plans for Māyāpur. Nara-Nārāyaṇa had built a scale model of the building ISKCON would construct on the newly acquired property, and Prabhupāda had shown it to all his guests and had asked them to help. Seeing Prabhupāda's absorption in this project, Girirāja had volunteered to help in any way required. "It seems the two things you want most," Girirāja had said, "are for the books to be distributed and to build a temple at Māyāpur."

"Yes," Prabhupāda had said, smiling. "Yes, thank you."

When Prabhupāda arrived at the home of Mr. Ram Niwas Dandaria in New Delhi, a waiting reporter interviewed him.

"I understand," said the reporter, "that by 'Kṛṣṇa' you mean some eternal principle."

"I do not mean a principle," Prabhupāda replied. "I mean a person like you and me." Prabhupāda was explaining Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Person when suddenly sirens began sounding.

"Blackout! Blackout!" cried the reporter and others in the house. War between Pakistan and India had been imminent for weeks, and air raid drills and warnings were now commonplace in Delhi.

"Sir"—the reporter spoke tensely in the darkened room—"this is the presence of reality. We are being threatened by this fight with Pakistan. The siren is the ugly reality coming for us."

"We are always in the ugly reality," Prabhupāda said, "—twenty-four hours a day. Suppose there is no blackout? Still, if you go in the street, there is no guarantee that you will get home. In this way, you are always in the ugly reality. Why do you say only this blackout? This is just one of the features of this ugly reality. That's all."

Reporter: "Yes, but at the moment..."

Prabhupāda: "You do not realize that you are in ugly reality twenty-four hours a day? *Padam padam yad vipadām*. There is danger at every step."

Reporter: "I know, sir, but this is collective, national danger. Have you anything to offer us as a remedy?"

Prabhupāda: "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is our only remedy. Take to this process, and you will be happy."

Reporter: "Sir, I think someone should go to the Yahya Khan [the president of Pakistan]."

Prabhupāda: "What benefit will you derive by going to Yahya Khan?"

Reporter: "Someone is out to kill me."

Prabhupāda: "But suppose Yahya Khan does not kill you? Will you be safe? Then what is the use to go to Yahya Khan? You will die today or tomorrow. If you want to save yourself, then go to Kṛṣṇa. That is our proposition. Even if you go to Yahya Khan, and he does not fight, then you mean to say that you will live forever? What is the use of flattering Yahya Khan? Flatter Kṛṣṇa, so that you may be saved perpetually. Why don't you do that?"

Reporter: "I was only thinking in terms of collective security. I can see your point..."

Prabhupāda: "You should know that you are always in danger."

Reporter: "Yes, sir, we agree. The late Einstein said the same thing..."

Prabhupāda: "That is our position, and Kṛṣṇa says, 'I will save you.' Therefore, let us go to Kṛṣṇa. Why go to Yahya Khan?"

Reporter: "Simply because he is disturbing us, that's all."

Prabhupāda: "Your mind is always disturbing you all the time, because it is always with you. Your body is always with you. Are you not suffering from bodily pains? Why don't you go to Yahya Khan to cure your pains? You are always in danger. Why don't you realize that?"

Reporter: "We realize that this is a national disaster."

Prabhupāda: "These are symptoms. People are trying to give a patchwork cure for the disease. We are giving the supreme cure. This is the difference. No patchwork cure will help you. You need a complete cure.

janma karma ca me divyam

evam yo vetti tattvataḥ

tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma

naiti mām eti so 'rjuna

The cure is no more repetition of birth and death. That is what we want. That is the benefit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Yaṁ prāpya na nivartante/ tad dhāma paramaṁ mama. If you go to Kṛṣṇa, then you don't come back again to this material world."

Reporter: "Sir, mine was a very hypothetical question. Suppose a hundred pure, saintly, Kṛṣṇa conscious people are meditating or discussing together, and someone comes along and drops the bomb—"

Prabhupāda: “Those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious are not afraid of bomb. When they see a bomb coming, they think that Kṛṣṇa desired the bomb to come. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person is never afraid of anything. Bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syāt. One who has the conception that something can exist outside of Kṛṣṇa is afraid. On the other hand, one who knows that everything is coming from Kṛṣṇa has no reason to be afraid. The bomb is coming—he says, “Ah, Kṛṣṇa is coming.' That is the vision of the devotee. He thinks, “Kṛṣṇa wants to kill me with a bomb. That is all right. I will be killed.' That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

When the reporter asked if the Vaiṣṇava would die without fighting, Prabhupāda said that the Vaiṣṇava would fight, but only under the direction of Kṛṣṇa, and he cited Arjuna and Hanumān as examples. He continued to explain Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the only solution. The blackout ended.

A few of Prabhupāda's disciples had organized the New Delhi paṇḍāl program like the public festivals Prabhupāda had already introduced in India. Tāmāla Kṛṣṇa, Tejās, and Guru dāsa had enlisted the help of important Delhi men, including the mayor and members of New Delhi's Management and Reception Committee. These persons had granted per mission and issued letters of introduction to others, whom the devotees had then approached for donations.

The devotees found everyone they met sympathetic to Śrīla Prabhupāda. They respected him, especially after meeting him. Some disagreed philosophically, yet all were impressed by Prabhupāda's converting Westerners to Hindu dharma and God consciousness, and they had genuine respect for Prabhupāda's worldwide propagation of the teachings of Bhagavad-gītā.

Prabhupāda had great stature among the Indians as a sādhu. Speaking only on the basis of the scriptures, he exhibited full surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was above politics and sectarianism; he was fully spiritual and commanded respect. Everyone, regardless of personal philosophies or practices, seemed to accept him as a true representative of Indian culture, a genuine sādhu and guru.

Among the distinguished persons who agreed to appear as guest speakers during the ten-day festival were Sri Hans Raj Gupta, mayor; H. Bachchan, a famous Hindi poet; Sri Syama Caran Gupta, chairman of the Delhi Metropolitan Council; Sri C. B. Agarwal, a famous orator; Sri Vipin Candra Misra, magistrate of the Delhi High Court; Dr. Atma Ram, a renowned scientist; Colonel B. R. Mohan, ex-mayor and industrialist of Lucknow; Sri L. N. Sakalani, a prominent industrialist; Sri Aditya Nath Jha, the lieutenant-governor of Delhi; Sri Jagjivan Ram, Indian defense minister; and His Excellency James George, the Canadian high commissioner. Guru dāsa had also had friendly conversations with the U.S. ambassador to India, Kenneth Keating, who had repeatedly expressed his respect for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Ambassador Keating regretted that he would be out of town during the function.

The devotees had secured an excellent location at the L.I.C. Grounds in Connaught Place, the heart of New Delhi's commercial district. There they had arranged for a large tent and outdoor lighting for the ten-day festival. On opening day the program started at six A.M. with a kīrtana and an āratī before the newly arrived Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, white marble Deities from Jaipur enthroned upon a flower-bedecked altar on the large stage. Attendance was sparse at first, but picked up when after a noon kīrtana and āratī devotees began distributing Kṛṣṇa prasādam. The evening program

started with a kīrtana, which continued enthusiastically, building to an ecstatic climax as Śrīla Prabhupāda entered.

For the pious people of Delhi, the evening Hare Kṛṣṇa festival was a momentous occasion. Since the location and the hour were ideal and admission was free, the crowd had grown to tens of thousands, many having come specifically to see the young American Vaiṣṇavas.

At Prabhupāda's arrival hundreds of people surged forward to touch his feet and receive his blessings, as a ring of disciples escorted him through the crowd. Prabhupāda, wearing a gray wool cādar, his "swami hat" pushed back casually on his head, moved calmly forward toward the stage with natural, aristocratic poise. He sat on the vyāsāsana, and the audience quieted.

New Delhi's mayor, Sri Hans Raj Gupta, spoke first. He had met Śrīla Prabhupāda in the early 1960s when Prabhupāda had approached him for a donation to publish the first volume of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Mayor Gupta, recognizing Prabhupāda as "someone sincere and near to God," had helped, and Prabhupāda had later presented him with complimentary copies of the first two volumes of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Mr. Gupta was impressed by Prabhupāda's success in spreading Vaiṣṇavism in the West, and as he introduced Śrīla Prabhupāda, he expounded on the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy he had read in Prabhupāda's Bhāgavatams.

He said, speaking in Hindi, that as mayor of Delhi for five years he had many times welcomed important visitors and delivered addresses, but such functions were usually only formalities. This was not, however, the case with Śrīla Prabhupāda, he said, since no one he had ever known could compare with him. He praised Prabhupāda for doing "an immense amount of good work in India and the whole world." Said Mayor Gupta, "He has also given me love and affection, and I am more affected by that than anything else."

Then Prabhupāda spoke. When he began by asking whether the audience preferred him to speak in Hindi or English, many called out for Hindi, a few for English. But Prabhupāda announced, "I am going to speak in English, because my disciples, being Americans and Europeans, have joined me. They are following me, and they must understand. If I speak in Hindi they cannot follow. So I am going to speak in English."

"Ladies and gentlemen," Prabhupāda continued, "I thank you for your kindly participating in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Just now we will vibrate one transcendental song, Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava Ku... jabihārī. As you know, Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the pleasure potency of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When He wants to enjoy, He exhibits His pleasure potency, which is known as Rādhārāṇī."

After chanting Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava Prabhupāda expounded the science of Kṛṣṇa for half an hour, quoting Bhagavad-gītā on why Kṛṣṇa comes to the material world, how the jīva souls are transmigrating from one body to another, birth after birth, and how human life is the opportunity for the jīva souls to revive their love of Kṛṣṇa.

"This is religion," Prabhupāda said, "—simply surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Become a Kṛṣṇaite... It doesn't require a church. It doesn't require a mosque. It doesn't require anything. But wherever you sit down, you can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is the easiest method."

Following Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the ancient speaker of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Prabhupāda condemned a materialistic life spent "working hard like the hogs or dogs," without self-realization. He emphasized that India had a treasure house of knowledge, which Indians should distribute all over the world. Unfortunately, the Indians were forgetting their real duty.

In conclusion Prabhupāda said, "So there are many things to be spoken in this connection of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I am trying to present this to you in the next ten days. This is the beginning. I shall request you to come here. We don't charge any fees. We are depending on Kṛṣṇa. If Kṛṣṇa likes, He will benefit us. We are completely surrendered to Kṛṣṇa. If He likes, He can maintain us. If He likes, He can kill us. We don't mind. We have no business. We have no separate interest. We request you to come and join this movement. It is not sectarian. We have many Hindus, Christians, Jews, Muhammadans, and Sikhs also all over the world who are now in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We are preaching one word, Kṛṣṇa, one scripture, Bhagavad-gītā, and one mantra, Hare Kṛṣṇa. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Thank you very much."

Prabhupāda attempted to leave the stage, and again the crowd rushed forward to touch his lotus feet. Although Prabhupāda's disciples were already convinced of his greatness, that greatness took on a vivid reality at times like this, when they heard him speaking so powerfully and saw him surrounded by throngs of worshipers.

As Prabhupāda proceeded to his car, he remained calm and humble, but the disciples surrounding him tensed to protect him from being jostled by a frantic crowd. Yet despite the devotees' sincere attempts, individuals in the crowd would manage to break through, diving between the devotees' legs to throw themselves before Prabhupāda.

"Do you know why they are worshiping me?" Prabhupāda said, turning to the disciples near him. "It is because I am free from sex desire."

For ten consecutive nights Śrīla Prabhupāda lectured at the paṇḍāl. In many of his lectures he would speak of dharma (religion) in connection with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

"The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the topmost yoga system. It is very scientific. Don't think it is a sentimental movement. It is authorized, supported by the Vedic literatures. And actually it is becoming effective. Religion is surrender to God. These boys and girls have taken to this real religion. This movement is so important, and we are giving everyone a chance to make this life successful. Therefore our humble request is that you take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

On the fifth evening, after Justice Misra had referred to religion in his introduction, Śrīla Prabhupāda defined the word in his lecture. "Religion means constitutional position. In the English dictionary religion is described as faith. But by Vedic definition religion cannot be changed like

faith because it is the law given by the Lord. Only surrender unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa is dharma. That is Kṛṣṇa's verdict. One should not have any ulterior motive in approaching God.

"Why not surrender immediately? Be intelligent. Real religion means to surrender immediately. Why should you wait for many, many births? We request all of you to try to understand this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness very seriously. Take to it, and you will become happy."

Śrīla Prabhupāda saw the Indian people abandoning their dharma for materialism, and he spoke strongly, pointing out their great mistake and urging them to rectify it. "If you actually want to advance your nation, India, then you must take to the culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This will glorify your country. You cannot compete with the Western world in the field of technology. It is impossible. The Western countries are meant for that purpose, for advancing technology. But you are meant for a different purpose. Your special advantage is that you have been born in this land of Bhārata-varṣa after many, many births and after performing many pious activities.

"India is very poverty-stricken, so wherever I go I am told I come from a very poor country. India advertises this image—our ministers beg from other countries. We are accepted as a beggars' culture. At the Berkeley University one Indian student protested the studying of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. He was the only student to protest. He said, 'Swamiji, what benefit is made by accepting this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement?' In another place a girl asked me, 'Swamiji, what is God?' So I asked her, 'Are you Indian? You should be ashamed of being called an Indian, because you ask what is God, although you come from India, the land of God.' India is the land where Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared. So although you may be born Indian, if you have no dharma, what is the difference between you and the animals?"

One night while Prabhupāda was speaking, an American hippie in the audience approached the stage. He had long, wild blond hair and wore a vest and high leather boots. A miniature framed picture of Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva hung on a chain around his neck. When the boy tried to climb up on the stage, some of the devotees pushed him back, but Śrīla Prabhupāda intervened. He had a devotee bring a cushion and place a microphone in front of the boy. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Yes?"

"Have you realized yourself?" the young man demanded. "Have you realized the soul in the innermost depths of your being?"

"Yes!" Śrīla Prabhupāda replied.

At first the man was taken aback, but then he again challenged, "Now you tell me another thing. When was the Bhagavad-gītā written?"

"Now you answer my question," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "What is the process of receiving knowledge from the Bhagavad-gītā?"

"No," the young man retorted, "you tell me—when was the Bhagavad-gītā written? In your lecture you said five thousand years ago, but according to other swamis, it was written only fifteen hundred years ago. Answer my question. I asked you first!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda raised his voice angrily. "I am not your servant, I am Kṛṣṇa's servant. You must answer my question!"

A heated argument began, with the hippie yelling at Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Prabhupāda arguing back. Finally, the devotees removed the boy from the stage.

The incident confused the audience. Many people began to leave. "Why did your Guru Mahārāja become angry?" some of them demanded from the devotees. "He should have answered the man's question." Some of the civic leaders supporting the paṇḍāl program also became upset, fearing Śrīla Prabhupāda had made an unfavorable impression on the public. Those who were devotional, however, remained in their seats to hear further what Prabhupāda had to say.

To the devotees it was inconceivable. Why had Prabhupāda, in the middle of his talk, invited a crazy hippie onto the stage, given him a microphone and a seat, and then argued with him to the point of yelling and shouting? And all before an audience of twenty thousand!

Bhavānanda: One man who had helped organize the paṇḍāl protested, "Oh, Swamiji has gotten angry. This is not good." But Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed to have done it purposefully. He had spoken for a long time that evening on how to understand the Bhagavad-gītā, and then he had this hippie brought on the stage. It was bewildering to us. We couldn't figure it out.

Girirāja: Śrīla Prabhupāda was actually using the entire incident to illustrate the process of understanding Bhagavad-gītā. After the man left, Prabhupāda completed his lecture by stating that one must approach Kṛṣṇa or Kṛṣṇa's representative with a submissive attitude, by serving and inquiring, not simply asking challenging questions. The whole incident had illustrated this point.

Yadubara: Many in the audience misunderstood the incident. It caused a split. But those who understood what Śrīla Prabhupāda had done could see that this hippie was a rascal, and this had been a time for transcendental anger against his nonsensical opinions.

Tejās: After everything was over, Prabhupāda told us, "Just as the gopīs were lusty for Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna would also get angry for Kṛṣṇa. So it is not bad that a devotee becomes angry for Kṛṣṇa." But many people in the crowd could not understand this point—how a devotee is not impersonal. The Indians are used to seeing impersonalist yogīs who express no emotion. The audience was mostly impersonalists.

The last night of the paṇḍāl program, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke privately with James George, the Canadian high commissioner.

Mr. George: "You have attracted so many Canadians and Americans."

Prabhupāda: "I have not attracted them. Kṛṣṇa has attracted them."

Mr. George: "True."

Prabhupāda: “Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive. I am simply presenting the means of being attracted. That is my business. It is similar to the way a magnet attracts iron. If the iron is rusty, however, then magnetic force cannot attract. Therefore, my business is to remove the dirt. This process is *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*, cleansing the heart.

“At the present moment every one of us is in a consciousness of thinking, ‘I am this body.’ Because you were born in Canada, you are thinking you are Canadian. Because I was born in India, I am thinking I am Indian. And because he was born in America, he is thinking he is American. None of us are American, Canadian, or Indian. We are living entities.”

Mr. George: “I have no problem following all of that. How, though, is this change of consciousness to be brought about, for example, in the West? This, I take it, is your mission.”

Prabhupāda: “There is no question of East and West. It is philosophy—it is science. In mathematics, for instance, two plus two equals four. This is equally understandable in the West as well as the East. It is not that two plus two in the West is five, and two plus two in the East is three. Two plus two is equal to four everywhere.

“The first knowledge, then, that must be understood by human society is that we are not these bodies. It is very common knowledge. From this point, our spiritual knowledge can advance. If we do not know what spirit is, then what is the question of advancing in spiritual knowledge?”

After their conversation, Mr. George accompanied Prabhupāda to the stage and introduced him to the crowd.

“For several years I've been wanting to meet this swami and see what it was about him that was affecting so many of our young people in Canada and North America. I was very happy this evening to come in response to your kind invitation, and especially to meet Swamiji. I think, as he himself said to me a short time ago, there is something really happening. Whether he is doing it or it is being done through him, as he said, it is beside the point. But there is something happening, and everyone who doubts that should be here tonight to see this. It is happening, not only here in Delhi, but it's happening in Toronto and Cleveland and Los Angeles and New York and all sorts of places. What is it? I don't know how he would answer that question. For me, at a deeper level what is happening is the awakening of a search.”

In his lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda compared the material body to a machine operated by a driver, the soul. And he spoke of the soul's natural position as servant of Kṛṣṇa. Addressing Mr. George, Prabhupāda concluded his speech.

“Here our honorable high commissioner of Canada is present. I request that since you have come to our country, please try to understand this philosophy. I have traveled in your country, in Canada, also, and as you have already mentioned, we have got five branches, in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Hamilton, and Ottawa. So the boys are struggling. They are distributing culture, these books, and I am getting very encouraging reports. Many young men are also coming. It is a very scientific movement. So I request you to inform your government to give these boys facility to inject this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in your country. Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

* * *

After the successful ten-day paṇḍāl festival—seven hundred thousand had attended—Śrīla Prabhupāda took his disciples on a short excursion to Vṛndāvana. His preaching tours had taken him to such places as Amritsar, Surat, Indore, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, and Benares, but never to Vṛndāvana. With so many of his disciples gathered in Delhi for the festival, Prabhupāda considered it an opportune time to travel to nearby Vṛndāvana.

They set out in two vehicles, Śrīla Prabhupāda and four others in Mrs. Kamala Bakshi's Ambassador and forty devotees following in a rented bus. Prabhupāda remained silent during the ride out of the city, past the factories and through the agricultural fields, groves, and villages along the Delhi–Agra Road enroute to Vṛndāvana. When, after a couple of hours, they approached the outskirts of Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda directed the driver of his car to a village and into the center of the small town to a sweet-water well. Here Prabhupāda and his party drank, took a breakfast of fresh fruit, and then continued on their way. Just before reaching Chhatikara Road, which leads directly into Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda's car broke down.

Tejās: After Prabhupāda's car broke down, he rode the rest of the way with us on the bus. Our relationship with Prabhupāda was very reverential, although we were in the most intimate situation, staying with him and traveling in a bus with him. Prabhupāda never said anything about it. In those days we were actually very much like a family—Prabhupāda knew everyone, and everyone knew Prabhupāda and would talk to him—but still we were very reverential.

In Vṛndāvana a Mr. G. L. Saraf accommodated Prabhupāda, his secretaries, and the women in the party at his home, Saraf Bhavan. The rest of the devotees stayed in a nearby dharmasālā.

Prabhupāda had come to Vṛndāvana for more than just a pilgrimage; he had come to try and secure land for ISKCON. When in 1967 he had come to Vṛndāvana from America, he had come to recuperate, but on recovering his health he had looked for a place in Vṛndāvana for his disciples. He had tried to establish an “American House,” a center where his disciples could live in Vṛndāvana's ideal atmosphere and receive training in Kṛṣṇa conscious culture and then go out and preach. But after two months of little prospect for establishing his American House, he had left.

This time, however, Prabhupāda was coming to Vṛndāvana as that city's famous ambassador to the world, renowned for propagating the glories of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Vṛndāvana in the West. The success of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement was being widely publicized in India, as Prabhupāda and his band of foreign disciples traveled from city to city holding kīrtanas, lecturing from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and telling of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. So when Prabhupāda arrived in Vṛndāvana with forty disciples, the entire town heralded his presence.

The municipality of Vṛndāvana arranged a formal reception, attended by prominent local citizens and sādhus. A spokesman for the city praised Śrīla Prabhupāda and his accomplishments. “O great soul! Today we, the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, known as Brijabāsīs, all combinedly offer our humble welcome to Your Holiness in this holy place of Vṛndāvana, and in doing so we feel very proud... For many years you stayed in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple and worshiped Her Majesty

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in a meditative mood, and thus you now have the transcendental vision to deliver the entire world. As proof of your perfection, we can see these foreign devotees before us, and we feel very proud to see how you have transformed them into such pure devotees.

“O great preacher of Vedic culture, formerly a great many swamis went to foreign countries, but now you have wonderfully preached the saṅkīrtana movement and the sublime philosophy of bhakti cult in the Western countries, and that is the only means for giving peace and prosperity to all people of the world in this age. For preaching religion and culture, your holy name will remain ever dazzling.

“To speak frankly, we feel a very intimate relationship with you, and we feel perfect satisfaction at this time in the privilege to present you this address of welcome. We take it for granted that you are one of us in Vṛndāvana. We are sure that wherever you travel, you must carry with you the impression of Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. The culture, religion, philosophy, and transcendental existence of Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma travel with you. Through the great message Your Holiness carries, all the people of the world are now becoming very intimately related with Vṛndāvana-dhāma. We are certainly sure that through your preaching alone the transcendental message of Vṛndāvana will spread all over the world. May you be crowned a success in these noble activities.”

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke, beginning by explaining how the International Society for Krishna Consciousness is trying to establish daiva-varṇāśrama, or a God-conscious social order, with universal application.

“We should not consider that Kṛṣṇa is Hindu or Indian. Kṛṣṇa is for all. These foreigners are taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by understanding that Kṛṣṇa is for all. They are not accepting a form of religious principles, like Hindu or Muslim or Christian. These are designated religions. If I am calling myself a Hindu, this is not my religion—this is my designation. Because I happen to take birth in a Hindu family, therefore I call myself a Hindu. Or because I take birth in a particular land, I call myself Indian or American. But our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is not for such designated personalities. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sarvopādhi-vinirmukta. When one becomes free from all designations, he can take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As long as one is Hindu or Muslim or Christian, there is no question of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

“So these boys and girls, or ladies and gentlemen, who have joined me, they have given up their designations. They are no longer Americans or Canadians or Australians. They are thinking of themselves as eternal servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Without this, there is no question of liberation from the material contamination. As long as there is material contamination, we have to devise these social orders and spiritual orders, according to śāstra—as brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, brahmacārī, gr̥hastha, vānaprastha, and sannyāsa. These are all material designations. But this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is for becoming transcendental to these material designations, and these boys, these foreigners, they are being taught in that light.

“When I started my propaganda in New York, 26 Second Avenue, that time only half a dozen boys were coming and hearing. That hearing means I was singing, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and reading some verses from Bhagavad-gītā, and they were patiently hearing. Because I know if

someone patiently hears the holy name of Kṛṣṇa or about His pastimes, then—śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ—Kṛṣṇa purifies him from within.

“So, actually it so happened with these boys and girls. I say boys and girls, because in the Western countries there is no distinction. They are given equal liberty. In our country there is still discrimination. I mean to say, grown-up boys and girls are not allowed to mix together, although it is going on now. But in European countries there is no such restriction. So there was no possibility of making any distinction between the boys and the girls. So many of them are attending. I was chanting in Tompkins Square Park, and these boys and girls used to surround me and dance and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Some of them became a little advanced and purified and came forward, “Swamiji, please accept me as your disciple.”

“So my condition was that anyone who wants to become my disciple must be free from the four kinds of sinful activities: illicit connection with women, meat-eating, intoxication, gambling. In this way, on this condition, these boys and girls were accepted as my disciples. According to pañcarātrikī viddhi, when they are fairly advanced they are given the sacred thread, upanayana-saṁskāra, following the path and instruction of my Guru Mahārāja, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. According to śāstra, they should not be considered as coming from families of mlecchas and yavanas—they should not be considered like that—because they are now purified. That is also mentioned by Śukadeva Gosvāmī in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and you know of it:

kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśā

ābhīra-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ

ye 'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ

śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ

How to become purified? By taking shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. So they are all purified according to the pañcarātrikī viddhi, and many of them have got this sacred thread."

Prabhupāda continued explaining the holy name's power to elevate anyone, regardless of birth, and he cited Haridāsa Ṭhākura who, despite his Muhammadan birth, was accepted as the ācārya of chanting the holy name. Prabhupāda also discussed the dynamics of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, telling how, according to Rūpa Gosvāmī's principle of yukta-vairāgya, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness was using material things in the service of Kṛṣṇa.

“In the Western countries they are very luxuriously situated. My disciples are giving me residential quarters even a governor could not imagine. I remember one night some time back I was a guest in a Lucknow government house. At that time the governor was Biswanath Das, and he was personally known to me. So I remember the kind of luxurious apartment where I had the opportunity to lie down one night. But they, my disciples, are giving me all this. So we cannot reject that, because that is the standard of living in America. You cannot say, “No, I shall not lie down in this nice apartment. I shall lie down in the street. I am a sannyāsī.” Then nobody will respect me. There in

America the standard of living is like that. Therefore, Rūpa Gosvāmī says that you should not be attached to that, but for the service of Kṛṣṇa if you have to use such things, you should receive it.

"People are engaged in the service of māyā, but we want to engage everything in the service of the Lord. That is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. So we are using airplanes, we are using dictaphones, we are using teletype machine. Even for cleansing our floor, we are using a machine. This is the system. In each and every center we have got new cars. We cannot do without them. In Europe and America practically no gentleman walks in the street. It is the system there. So we have to use it, but we should not be attached to it. Our attachment should be only for Kṛṣṇa, and for Kṛṣṇa's service we can accept anything. That is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement."

Prabhupāda concluded his address by asking for land. He wanted to establish a temple for his society in Vṛndāvana.

Afterward, a Mr. S., a motor parts salesman and resident of Vṛndāvana, offered Prabhupāda a plot of land his family had been saving for some worthy religious purpose. Prabhupāda smiled. Although he had only just arrived in Vṛndāvana, already Kṛṣṇa was providing an opportunity for establishing his ISKCON center. Prabhupāda thanked Mr. S. for offering this service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. By his donating land, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would increase, and the donor, Mr. S., would benefit.

Prabhupāda was aware that behind the formal reception and ceremonial words of Vṛndāvana's prominent citizens dwelt a deeper feeling of reserve and even suspicion, especially among the caste gosvāmīs, the proprietors of Vṛndāvana's major temples. While accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda's foreign disciples as devotees (of a sort), many Vṛndāvana residents nevertheless felt reluctant to accept the foreign Vaiṣṇavas as brāhmaṇas, sannyāsīs, and pūjārīs. This misunderstanding was due to a traditional Hindu concept: only those born in caste brāhmaṇa families could become brāhmaṇas.

Prabhupāda, however, followed exactly in the footsteps of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who had freely accepted anyone, regardless of sex or social position. When in 1932 Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had led more than one thousand followers in a Vṛndāvana pilgrimage, certain prideful caste brāhmaṇas had denied the pilgrims entry into the temples. The pilgrims had been harassed by rock throwers and boycotted by shopkeepers. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had then met with brāhmaṇas of Vṛndāvana and had scripturally proved to them that the soul, being transcendental, was free from designation and that anyone who became a Vaiṣṇava automatically qualified as a brāhmaṇa. The prejudices, however, had remained.

Prabhupāda also followed Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta in denying that the gosvāmī title could be inherited. Gosvāmī meant one who controlled the senses, and the title could not be adopted simply because one was born in a family of so-called gosvāmīs.

The original gosvāmīs were the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana: Śrī Sanātana, Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Śrī Jīva, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, and Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmīs, all of whom were in the renounced order and were, therefore, without issue. Almost five hundred years ago, these six Gosvāmīs had discovered the places of Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana pastimes and had built the first big temples in Vṛndāvana. They had appointed married disciples to carry on the Deity worship in their

temples, and now the descendants of those original priests were claiming exclusive rights as temple gosvāmīs in Vṛndāvana. Prabhupāda had written in *The Nectar of Devotion* about his spiritual master's struggle in this matter:

...after the disappearance of Lord Caitanya's great associate Lord Nityānanda, a class of priestly persons claimed to be the descendants of Nityānanda, calling themselves the gosvāmī caste. They further claimed that the practice and spreading of devotional service belonged only to their particular class, which was known as Nityānanda-vaṁśa. In this way, they exercised their artificial power for some time, until Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the powerful ācārya of the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava sampradāya, completely smashed their idea. There was a great hard struggle for some time, but it has turned out successfully, and it is now correctly and practically established that devotional service is not restricted to a particular class of men.

Prabhupāda therefore opposed the caste gosvāmīs' ideas of birthright. And the caste gosvāmīs feared Prabhupāda's movement, since it threatened their hereditary social preeminence. Yet on this occasion of Prabhupāda's triumphant return after preaching Vṛndāvana's glories to the Western world, no one protested his attempts to establish a temple. Those who disagreed remained silent or even offered flowery praise.

The land was in Ramaṇa-reti. Prabhupāda noted that the property on the outskirts of Vṛndāvana was located on busy Chhatikara Road, a main thoroughfare into Vṛndāvana and a traffic route to Agra and the Taj Mahal. The land was also adjacent to the Vṛndāvana parikrama path, where millions of pilgrims passed annually, circumambulating Vṛndāvana and visiting its temples and holy places.

Ramaṇa-reti (literally “charming sand”) was mostly forest, with a few āśramas and abandoned fields. Celebrated as a favorite spot of Kṛṣṇa's, where He and His brother Balarāma and Their cowherd boyfriends had played five thousand years ago, Ramaṇa-reti abounded in transcendental love of God, which is the special atmosphere of Vṛndāvana.

Although various city officials had casually mentioned that the city might donate land, Prabhupāda took more seriously Mr. S.'s offer. Mr. S. explained that although other sādhus had been asking for the land, he and his wife had not yet decided; they wanted to give it to a group who would build a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple there as soon as possible. When Prabhupāda assured Mr. S. he would do so, Mr. S. vowed that the land was now Prabhupāda's.

Prabhupāda had heard such promises before, and they had often proved false. But considering this offer serious, he appointed disciples to remain in Vṛndāvana to draw up a deed with Mr. S.

Meanwhile, Prabhupāda took his disciples on a pilgrimage to many of the important holy places of Vṛndāvana: Varṣāṇā (the birthplace of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī), Gokula (the place of Kṛṣṇa's earliest pastimes), Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Govardhana, and Vṛndāvana's major temples. At Govardhana Prabhupāda told the devotees not to step on Govardhana Hill or pick up any of the rocks: Govardhana Hill was nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Also at Govardhana Prabhupāda took the devotees to a little temple, where he showed them Kṛṣṇa's footprint. The footprint was very large. If Kṛṣṇa's foot had been that

big, the devotees marveled, then He must have been eight feet tall. "Yes," Prabhupāda said. "They were much bigger then."

Near Govardhana, at Bindu-sarovara, a lake commemorating the place where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa first met, the devotees swam while Prabhupāda bathed from buckets of water in the nearby field. Later, while Prabhupāda took prasādam, the devotees tried to chase away a few stray dogs by throwing stones and yelling, but Prabhupāda stopped them. "Leave them alone," he said, and he began throwing the dogs prasādam from his plate.

At Varṣāṇā, the birthplace of Rādhārāṇī, the devotees carried Prabhupāda on a palanquin up the many steep steps to the temple. On the top of the hill, he looked toward a distant hill. "Just over there," he said, pointing, "Kṛṣṇa used to come down that hill. Rādhā would come down this hill, and They would meet in the middle. There was a forest there. So this is a very special place, because it is the meeting place of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa."

In each holy place Prabhupāda would sit down, hold a kīrtana, and come before the Deity and offer obeisances. Then he would briefly describe the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa related with the particular place.

Dīnadayādri: The Indians at the holy places were always hounding Prabhupāda for money. They assumed that his disciples, being Americans, were rich, so they wanted money. Prabhupāda would give something, but there were so many that as soon as he would give to one, half a dozen others would crowd around him, preventing him from walking by. In some of the temples they wouldn't let us enter.

Prabhupāda then took his group to the place beside the Yamunā where Kṛṣṇa had shown His mother all the universes within His mouth. Touching the water, Prabhupāda said, "It is too cold for an old man like me. But you take a bath. I'll put a few drops on my head." He directed the women to a separate place to swim, where the Indian women bathed, and the men plunged in and began swimming. They sported in the water as Prabhupāda stood on the bank, watching. Suddenly Prabhupāda put on a gamshā, walked to the river's edge, sprinkled some water on his head, and then waded in up to his knees. The devotees were delighted to see him duck beneath the water and begin bathing and splashing with them in the Yamunā.

Śrīla Prabhupāda decided that he would remain in his quarters at Mr. Saraf's home, while his old friend Hitsaran Sharma took the devotees to Vṛndāvana's famous temples. Prabhupāda did, however, make a point of going with his disciples to visit the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, where he had lived for several years writing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Back to Godhead magazine before going to America in 1965.

At the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple Prabhupāda told the devotees of his plans for an ISKCON temple in Vṛndāvana, and he suggested to the Rādhā-Dāmodara pūjārī that ISKCON use the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple.

"We shall prepare the whole temple nicely," Prabhupāda said, "and we shall make a silver throne for the Deity. Fifty to a hundred men will take prasādam here. It will be unique. If you want to, we can do it. Otherwise we can start our own temple somewhere. We are prepared to spend money. If

you give us a chance, we'll spend it here. We want to make this a great festival in Vṛndāvana, because it is Jīva Gosvāmī's place. Rūpa Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī sat here. We have literature, we have books. Everyone is associating with us all over the world."

Yamunā devī dāśī: His Divine Grace was very frequently giving indication of how much he wanted his rooms at Rādhā-Dāmodara maintained nicely. He was extremely fond of his quarters there. One night during his stay in Saraf Bhavan he agreed that he would stay for one twenty-four-hour period within his rooms at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. It was a very exciting event for all of us to look forward to. He selected three or four men to accompany him to spend the night there at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple.

Saraf Bhavan was some distance from Seva-kuṇja, where the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple is located. During the very early hours of the morning I walked through the streets of Vṛndāvana and arrived at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. Inside of Śrīla Prabhupāda's sleeping room I could see the light coming through the latticed red stone windows and the wooden shutters. Back and forth he was walking and chanting.

Suddenly, very much to my surprise, the wooden shutters burst open, and a shaft of light filled a small corner of the courtyard. Prabhupāda stood in his room under one bare light bulb. When he saw me, he asked, "How have you gotten here?" I said that I had walked. "Oh, this is not good," he said. "It is very dangerous in the street. There are so many wild dogs. And there are dacoits. In this quarter a man will kill even for a loṭā [waterpot]."

So there was some chastisement from Prabhupāda on the one hand, but on the other hand he seemed pleased. "So you are chanting japa?" he said. And I said, "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda." He said, "That is very nice. So go to the samādhi of Rūpa Gosvāmī and chant there."

Then around four o'clock other pilgrims were starting to filter in to attend the morning āraṭi program. Prabhupāda came out where we were chanting, and he said that this corner at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple was just like the hub of the wheel of the spiritual world—it was the center. He requested that his rooms always be well maintained and that they be cleansed daily.

Rādhānātha: I had only met Śrīla Prabhupāda briefly in Bombay, and then I had gone alone to live in Vṛndāvana. I had lived there about six months with the local people, and it was there that I got real attached to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I used to just live on the bank of the river with all the bābājīs—a very simple life. I know it was just by that initial contact with Prabhupāda that that seed was planted.

One day a big bus full of American devotees having a kīrtana pulled into Vṛndāvana, and I was thinking, "Oh, here they are again." The first thing I asked was, "Is Prabhupāda coming?" And they said, "Yes, Prabhupāda is here. He will be speaking tomorrow morning."

I was already attracted to a lot of gurus in Vṛndāvana—Prabhupāda's Godbrothers and also devotees from other sampradāyas. But on the morning when I came for the Bhāgavatam class and heard Prabhupāda chanting Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava, I just sat there and listened. I had never seen anyone with such a quality of love for Kṛṣṇa. All the great people I had met in India became

insignificant when I saw Prabhupāda chanting Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava. He was so serious and grave, and the quality of his devotion was so intense. I just couldn't believe it.

He kept looking over at me every now and then, kind of nodding, because I guess he remembered me from Bombay. Then he spoke, and he was glorifying Vṛndāvana so nicely. He was talking about how wonderful Vṛndāvana is, how spiritual the atmosphere is, and he was talking about how careful the devotees must be to take advantage of the atmosphere.

From that day I started thinking, "This is my Guru Mahārāja"—just because of the way he spoke. His lecture had been so precise and inclusive that it had encompassed every other philosophy and every other teacher I had ever heard. I could see also that Prabhupāda's example was pure, and I could see his disciples were actually giving up sinful life. I used to go to his darśanas every day, although I was still living on the bank of the Yamunā.

All the people of Vṛndāvana were glorifying Prabhupāda. They were so proud of him, because the people of Vṛndāvana are attached to Vṛndāvana. They love Kṛṣṇa, and they love Vṛndāvana, because Vṛndāvana is the place where Kṛṣṇa lives. That's their mood. They worship the land of Vṛndāvana. But they would tell me they appreciated Prabhupāda. Most of them would call him "Swami Bhaktivedanta." They would say, "He's the greatest saint, because he is bringing Vṛndāvana all over the world. He is making the glories of Vṛndāvana known to the whole world."

Then one day Prabhupāda and his disciples went to an āśrama in Rāmāṇa-reti. I got there late, just as Prabhupāda was leaving. He was walking the last twenty yards or so to his taxi, and many Brijabāsīs were offering their full daṇḍavats in the road. I felt very insignificant, another member of the crowd, and as Prabhupāda walked by me I offered my full obeisances also.

When I lifted my head to get up, however, I saw Prabhupāda's feet were right there in front of me. I thought, "Oh, my God, Prabhupāda is standing right there." I very slowly looked up, and Prabhupāda was just standing there looking right at me. He looked me in the eyes for a couple of seconds and then said, "So how long have you been here in Vṛndāvana?" I said, "About six months, Śrīla Prabhupāda." He just looked at me again, and he was in a very serious mood, very compassionate, gazing into my eyes. He nodded his head and said, "Do you like it here?" I said, "This is the most wonderful place I've ever been in my life."

Then all of a sudden his serious expression just blossomed into the most beautiful smile. His eyes were glistening radiantly, and he looked at me for about five or ten seconds. It seemed like a real long time—I couldn't believe the mercy he was giving me—and then he just replied, "That is very nice. Vṛndāvana is a wonderful place." And then he walked on.

This was very special for me, because most of the devotees were always telling me I was in māyā for staying in Vṛndāvana and because I was kind of attached to my own program in Vṛndāvana. I was feeling that the devotees didn't understand, and I was upset with them, thinking that they didn't appreciate the atmosphere. But Prabhupāda's words alleviated all my anxieties toward the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. It was the most special personal contact. It wasn't what Prabhupāda was saying. It was his personal, transcendental concern for me. So then I went to his classes every day and all

the darśanas, and there was no doubt in my mind. He very much convinced me on every level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

When Prabhupāda left, the devotees told me that I should join and go on parikrama with them all around India, and they said that Prabhupāda had personally invited me to come. I was unbelievably appreciative that Prabhupāda was so merciful, but at the same time I was very attached to Vṛndāvana. I told them I just wanted to stay here, and if they ever came back I would serve Prabhupāda here, but that I didn't want to leave Vṛndāvana.

Soon after that, my visa expired. So I had to leave the country. But before I left, the people of Vṛndāvana, especially the bābājīs, were telling me that Swami Bhaktivedanta had established New Vṛndāvana in the West. They said, "If you have to leave Vṛndāvana, you should go to New Vṛndāvana. So whatever you do, don't leave Vṛndāvana. New Vṛndāvana and Old Vṛndāvana are the same, because Swami Bhaktivedanta has created Vṛndāvana in the West." They said it with great pride. So I left for New Vṛndāvana.

Prabhupāda trained his disciples in the etiquette of living in Vṛndāvana-dhāma. "In the holy dhāma," he said, "if one of my disciples drinks from a jug incorrectly and he contaminates that jug, everyone will notice it. Don't be criticized for this uncleanness, or I will be criticized. It is the duty of the disciple to follow these etiquette habits very austere. I am putting so much energy into this party in India because I want to train you how to live here."

Prabhupāda wrote his disciples in the West of his successful tour of Vṛndāvana.

I am currently in Vrindaban with a party of 40 devotees, and we are having daily parikrama of the holy places. We shall return to Delhi tomorrow by coach. The officials and residents of Vrindaban have greeted us very nicely, and they are simply astounded to see our SKP chanting with great jubilation through the city streets. The Mayor has publicly proclaimed that I have done something wonderful, and practically speaking, they realize that before I went to the western countries no one there knew about Vrindaban. Now hundreds of visitors and hippies from your country come here to see Krishna's place. The Vrindaban devotees have understood that Vrindaban is now world-famous due to my preaching work, so they are all very much appreciating their home-town Swamiji.

* * *

Delhi

December 1, 1971

Upon his return to Delhi, Śrīla Prabhupāda, along with the forty disciples who had accompanied him to Vṛndāvana, stayed at the Birla Mandir. The host offered Prabhupāda a small house reserved for special guests in the back of the formal gardens.

Meanwhile, political turmoil continued to trouble the nation's capital, as the threat of an all-out war between India and Pakistan increased. Even peaceful Vṛndāvana had been disturbed, being only

ninety miles from Delhi and thirty-four miles from Agra, with its large military installation. One night, while Śrīla Prabhupāda had been staying at Saraf Bhavan, the local authorities had ordered a blackout. Śrīla Prabhupāda and the devotees had been confined to their quarters, the electricity had gone off, and everyone had covered their windows with blankets, so that even the candlelight could not be detected.

Nevertheless, despite political agitation and threats of war, Prabhupāda had now come to Delhi to preach. On his second day in the city he visited the American ambassador to India, Kenneth Keating, at the American Embassy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained to Mr. Keating the basic philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: the distinction between the material body and the self, or soul, living within the body. "You have got this striped coat," he told Mr. Keating, "but I cannot address you 'Mr. Striped Coat.' Yet we are actually being addressed like that. We are identifying with this body." And Prabhupāda explained the soul's transmigration through the 8,400,000 species.

"That is very interesting," Mr. Keating commented. "I believe in the transmigration of the soul."

"It is a fact," Prabhupāda said. "Just like this child is transmigrating from one body to another"—he indicated Sarasvatī. "In the same way, when I give up this body I will transmigrate to another body. This is a science."

"I see the American boys and girls, although coming from very rich and respectable families, are turning to hippies. In spite of your arrangement for very big universities, they are becoming frustrated. They are no longer satisfied to live in material opulence. So the present position of human society is dangerous, because everyone is feeling dissatisfied and confused."

"Do you have many Indian followers as well as foreigners?" Mr. Keating inquired.

"Yes, so far as Indians are concerned, everyone accepts Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

"Well," Mr. Keating added, "I am very impressed with the sincerity of these young American men."

"Everyone," said Prabhupāda, "as soon as he understands the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, will accept it immediately."

"When Swami Rajanandaji was here," said Mr. Keating, "I asked him his definition of God, and he thought a minute and said, 'Well, I would say God is the thread which links one good person to another.' I thought that was a very interesting definition."

"This is stated in Bhagavad-gītā," Prabhupāda said. "Just like you have a pearl necklace, and it is strung on a thread. So all the pearls are resting on that thread. Everyone is resting in God—not that only good men should be resting on that thread. The definition given by the Vedānta-sūtra is perfect: *janmādy asya yataḥ*. 'God is the origin, or source, of everything.' What do you say?"

"I am very impressed," Mr. Keating replied.

"Another definition of God," Prabhupāda continued, "is that He is all-attractive. Everyone has the attractive features of opulence, strength, fame, beauty, renunciation, and wisdom to some extent. You are an ambassador, a representative of your country. So you are attractive. Sometimes somebody comes to me, 'Let me see the Swamiji.' So this attractiveness everyone possesses. But God means He who has got all attractiveness in full."

After some time Ambassador Keating apologized and excused himself for an appointment he had to keep. "I am an ambassador, and I have to move from the sublime to the mundane. I appreciate very much your coming."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Now I am also coming to the mundane point of view. Next time I come back to the U.S.A. I wish to see the president."

"I can write a letter," Mr. Keating offered. "I will be glad to help you."

Prabhupāda smiled. "You are busy helping the whole world so that peace may come and people may be happy. But instead of being happy, the people of your country are becoming hippies—there is some defect. And here is a chance to rectify that defect: Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So let us do something tangible, scientific, so that people will become happy."

That evening Prabhupāda wrote one of his disciples about the meeting.

You may be pleased to know that this morning I met here in Delhi with your American Ambassador to India, Mr. Kenneth Keating. He has got very good respect for our Movement, and he has promised to help me to arrange a meeting with your President when I shall return to your country perhaps in the late Spring. I have requested him to help this Movement and that help will save your country from great danger by turning hippies into happies... let us see what can be done.

The next day, while Prabhupāda was on his morning walk in the streets of Delhi, he asked a devotee to get a paper from a newsboy passing by on a bicycle. Prabhupāda read the headlines: "Emergency declared; three enemy planes downed." He had a devotee read aloud.

Pakistan launched a massive attack on the western front, bombing seven Indian airfields and crossing the cease-fire line in strength in Poonch... The Prime Minister in her broadcast late tonight described it as a full-scale war launched by Pakistan against India... Earlier the President had declared national emergency.

The national emergency had international implications, with America cutting off supplies to India and supporting Pakistan, China threatening India, and Russia supporting India.

"This war will not last long," Śrīla Prabhupāda said immediately. "It will soon be finished. And Pakistan will lose."

Later that night he heard Indira Gandhi's broadcast over the radio.

I speak to you at a moment of great peril to our country and our people... Today a war in Bangla Desh has become a war on India. This imposes on me, my Government and the people of India a great responsibility. We have no other option but to put our country on a war footing.

Prabhupāda was not alarmed. War was not the only “ugly reality”; birth, death, old age, disease, and so many other material sufferings were inevitable—war or no war. Prabhupāda continued to follow the news, however, and some days Śyāmasundara would purchase for him three or four different newspapers.

After a few days at the Birla Mandir, Prabhupāda and his party moved to a dharmaśālā in the Kamala Nagar district of old Delhi. There Prabhupāda delivered what the devotees later referred to as “the blackout lectures.” While black-painted newspapers and blankets covered the windows and combat jets flew overhead, Prabhupāda would speak by candlelight to his disciples.

“The propensity to fight is very strong in this age of Kali,” he said, “and the population is becoming so sinful that they are trying to accumulate atomic weaponry for ultimate destruction of humanity.” Sometimes Prabhupāda would ask a disciple to speak to the group also. No guests were present, since during blackouts no one could walk the streets, and on some nights the police pounded on the door demanding the devotees extinguish even their candles.

“Due to the war in India,” Prabhupāda wrote in a letter, “our programs here have been reduced, and there is every night a blackout.” Not only in Delhi but in other parts of India his disciples were encountering difficulties in their preaching attempts. In Māyāpur the government had ordered the devotees to leave the area because of its close proximity to Bangladesh.

As Prabhupāda had predicted, however, the war did not last long. On December 17 Prabhupāda read the headlines of the Indian Express—“NIAZI SURRENDERS: BANGLA DESH IS FREE. India Decides on Unilateral Cease-Fire in West.” Prabhupāda was joyous. He told the devotees confidentially that the reason the war had ended so quickly was because of their massive saṅkīrtana-yajña at the paṇḍāl a month earlier.

On the very same page that had announced India's victory, however, another headline read, “PM blames USA for war.” Indira Gandhi was blaming President Nixon for the war. The American devotees tensed as they walked the streets, sensing the Indians' mistrust, and daily newspaper propaganda only worsened the condition. “There is great propaganda now against America in India,” Prabhupāda wrote, “due to the country's stand against India and the war with Pakistan.”

Delhi was the seat of much political agitation, and Prabhupāda decided to relocate the devotees who were there with him. Although his disciples were peaceful and far from being politically active, he sent some to Calcutta, while others accompanied him to Bombay. International politics would not stop the oncoming wave of Lord Caitanya's movement.

SPL 38: No One Listens to a Poor Man

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

No One Listens to a Poor Man

From 1965 until 1970 Śrīla Prabhupāda had concentrated mainly on reestablishing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in America. His plan had been that if the Americans turned to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the rest of the world would follow. Although his preaching to the English-speaking people had begun in India, some sixty years of singlehanded endeavor there had convinced him that Indians were either too absorbed in politics, too ignorant of their spiritual heritage, or too crippled by poverty to seriously accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore he had not been successful.

But in the United States success had come. Clearly, America was the prime field for implanting Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Yet Prabhupāda found the West uncultured and uncivilized. If a trace of civilization remained anywhere, he would often say, it was in India, the heart of the original Vedic culture.

By 1970 he had demonstrated through his extensive traveling and preaching that he intended to establish the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement not only in the U.S. but all over the world—especially in India. Even accepting that preaching in the United States and preaching in India were equally important, still the preaching in the United States was going well without Prabhupāda's constant, direct management; what he had begun, his American disciples could continue.

But in India Prabhupāda could not allow his disciples to manage ISKCON. He saw how often and how easily the Indians were able to cheat his disciples. Half of ISKCON's work in India was being spoiled, he said, due to his disciples' being cheated. If they put on a paṇḍāl program, they might end up paying several times the standard cost. The only way for ISKCON to develop in India would be under Prabhupāda's direct management.

Beginning in 1970 with a small band of American disciples, Prabhupāda had traveled from place to place in India as a model sannyāsī, opening a great new field for ISKCON. Now he wanted to construct big temples in India—three in particular: one in Vṛndāvana, one in Māyāpur, and one in Bombay. As early as 1967 he had attempted to make an “American House” for his disciples in Vṛndāvana. Māyāpur, being the birthplace of Lord Caitanya, was especially important; and Bombay was India's major city, “the gateway to India.” As with most of Prabhupāda's big plans, even his closest disciples couldn't fully comprehend the scope of his vision. But Prabhupāda knew what he wanted, and he knew it all depended on Kṛṣṇa. Gradually he began to unfold his plans.

Temple construction, he said, was secondary to book publication and distribution. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness must run on two parallel lines, just as a train runs on two rails. One rail was bhāgavata-mārga; the other, pañcarātrikī viddhi. Bhāgavata-mārga referred to the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa and disseminating the message of Kṛṣṇa. The second rail, pañcarātrikī viddhi, referred to the rules and regulations for worshiping the Deity in the temple. Of the two, bhāgavata-mārga was the more important.

Although great liberated souls like Haridāsa Ṭhākura could remain in perfect Kṛṣṇa consciousness simply by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa constantly, Prabhupāda knew that his disciples, with their restless natures and past sinful habits, needed the special purification of worshiping the Lord in the temple.

Therefore, one of his reasons for wanting to establish temples in India was to purify his disciples by giving them elaborate Deity worship.

Temples, however, were also for preaching. "No one listens to a poor man," Prabhupāda would say. And he therefore wanted to construct palatial buildings, to attract the masses to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Especially he wanted this in India, where the tradition of temple worship still existed. Building temples and worshipping the Deity was secondary to publishing and distributing books, but it was not to be neglected. Prabhupāda prepared to give temple construction in Māyāpur, Vṛndāvana, and Bombay as much of his attention as necessary.

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Bombay

November 1971

For a year the devotees had been living at the Akash Ganga address, two apartments on the seventh floor of a building in the heart of Bombay. But Prabhupāda was not satisfied with this. He wanted land in Bombay, to build on and to expand. He was determined. Instead of his usual morning walks, he would take long rides in his car to observe various parts of the city.

Because many of the ISKCON life members lived in aristocratic Malabar Hill, Prabhupāda's disciples thought it a good place for a temple. On several occasions Prabhupāda rode to the top of Malabar Hill and walked around various properties, considering certain large buildings as possible temples. But for one reason or another he judged them all unacceptable.

Then in November, a Mr. N. offered to sell ISKCON five acres in Juhu, practically on the shore of the Arabian Sea. As soon as Śrīla Prabhupāda approached the land, he remembered having seen and considered it years before. In August of 1965, during the weeks just before he had left for America, he had been staying at Scindia Colony. In the evenings he had gone to the home of Scindia Steamship Company owner Mrs. Sumati Morarji in Juhu, where he had read and explained Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam for her and her guests. Several times he had passed this very property and had thought what a good location it would be for an āśrama and a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple. Although his attention had been absorbed in the task of leaving India, he had still considered the Juhu land. Now he was again in Juhu, reconsidering the same land he had noticed years before. He took it as a reminder from Kṛṣṇa.

The land was overgrown with tall grasses and bushes, and many coconut palms stood throughout. In the back of the property were several tenement buildings. The land bordered on Juhu Road, the main traffic artery back to Bombay, eighteen miles to the south. A broad expanse of beach on the Arabian Sea was a brief walk away.

The location was good—peaceful, yet not remote. Several five-star hotels bordered the nearby beach, and developers were beginning work on other hotels and apartment buildings. When Prabhupāda walked along the beach, he liked even more the idea of buying the land. Rich men had weekend homes on the beach, and thousands of Bombayites would be out enjoying the beach on

Sundays. Daily, hundreds of Juhu residents used the long, broad seashore for morning walks before going to work. Almost always people were strolling or gathering there, and yet the beach was clean. The mild waves and open skies were inviting. The locale was ideal not only for hotels, but for a Kṛṣṇa conscious center.

Prabhupāda wanted the Juhu land, and although his disciples continued to show him houses in Malabar Hill, he didn't change his mind. His disciples wanted whatever he wanted, yet they had trouble developing enthusiasm for a property so far from the city and with no available housing or temple facility.

Mr. N., the owner of the five-acre plot, had set a reasonable price and seemed friendly and sincere. Yet risks were involved in such transactions, and in this case, Prabhupāda even found reasons for suspicion. Through his lawyer, he learned that Mr. N. had previously entered into an agreement to sell this same land to the C. Company but had later cancelled the agreement. The C. Company had then filed a suit against Mr. N. for breach of contract. If the Bombay High Court decided in the C. Company's favor, the land would be awarded to them. When Prabhupāda's secretary questioned Mr. N. about this entanglement, Mr. N. assured him the C. Company could not win the suit, but that in any case, ISKCON could withhold a certain portion of their payment until the litigation with C. was settled.

Mr. N. was a well-known figure in Bombay. Formerly the sheriff of Bombay (an honorary judicial police position), he was now publisher-editor of one of the largest daily English newspapers in Bombay. He was wealthy, owning several properties in Juhu and Bombay, and influential—not a man one would want to oppose. To purchase the Juhu land under the present circumstances required boldness.

In late December Prabhupāda met with Mr. and Mrs. N. at their home in the Theosophical Colony in Juhu. Mr. N.'s home was on the beach, and thus the visit afforded Prabhupāda another opportunity to appreciate the value and beauty of Juhu Beach, with its border of palms leaning toward the sea. The Theosophical Colony was a private neighborhood of attractive homes with luxuriant lawns and flower gardens and many exotic birds. Ashoka trees grew on either side of Mr. N.'s driveway, and a line of palm trees, standing just inside the massive stone wall, encircled the property. A gardener opened the gate for Prabhupāda and the few disciples with him.

Mr. N. was a short, stocky man with a receding hairline. His hair was clipped short, and his round face was pockmarked. He appeared to be in his fifties. Mrs. N. had a fair complexion and, unusual for an Indian, wore her hair short. Prabhupāda had brought flower garlands and prasādam from the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities of ISKCON Bombay, and these he offered to Mr. and Mrs. N. Mr. N. invited his guests to sit with him and his wife on the front porch, which faced a picturesque garden.

Śrīla Prabhupāda openly expressed his appreciation of the Juhu land but admitted he had very little money. Mr. N., however, seemed inclined toward Prabhupāda and said he wanted to sell him the property. Quickly they reached a verbal agreement. To Mrs. N., however, the agreement seemed too liberal. But when she objected, her husband overruled her.

Prabhupāda and Mr. N. agreed on a down payment of 200,000 rupees; after making the down payment, ISKCON would immediately receive the conveyance. ISKCON would pay the remaining balance of 1,400,000 rupees later, in regular installments. Prabhupāda negotiated further regarding the down payment, offering to pay 50,000 rupees now and another 50,000 later, at which time ISKCON would be allowed to move onto the land. As soon as they paid the remaining 100,000 rupees, the down payment would be complete, and Mr. N. would give them the deed. Mr. N. agreed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was always one to think carefully over such business transactions. He had said that if a businessman tells you, "Sir, for you I am making no profit," you should know he is lying. Therefore, even in ISKCON's early days in New York City, when the real estate shark Mr. Price had posed as a well-wisher of the devotees, Prabhupāda had been suspicious. Mr. Price had, in fact, cheated the devotees, despite Prabhupāda's warnings to them. Now, as then, Prabhupāda was suspicious. But he wanted the Juhu land and would take the risk.

Prabhupāda had taken similar chances. At Jhansi in 1953 he had occupied a building, although he had had little legal standing or financial security. And in his first storefront in New York, as well as in his largest building to date, the Watseka Avenue church in Los Angeles, he had moved in without assurance of the monthly payments. Practically the entire success of his movement had come by his taking one risk after another for Kṛṣṇa. When the devotees in Boston had written to Prabhupāda that they had rented a big house for one thousand dollars a month, calculating that they would be able to make the payments by dramatically increasing their Back to Godhead sales, Prabhupāda had approved and had even commended their example to others. So if some risks were involved in Bombay, that was only natural.

Once committed to the land, Prabhupāda began to unfold his vision for a grand project in Bombay. On December 22 he wrote to Yamunā,

Here in Bombay we have got good prospects to purchase a very large land in Juhu for very cheap price, just in the middle of a rich neighborhood. We shall build our camp there and begin constructing a temple immediately, and later on we shall develop a large hotel and school. There is also a chance of getting a nice bungalow in Bombay city also. So in general we shall make our headquarters in Bombay, and also build up Vrindaban and Mayapur.

While devotees around the world delighted to hear Prabhupāda's plan for a Bombay center, devotees in Bombay had mixed feelings. To envision a temple rising from what was little more than a jungle tract was not easy. Nor was it easy to envision the five-star ISKCON hotel Prabhupāda spoke of. The tenement buildings in the rear of the land were fully occupied, and according to Indian law, the tenants could not be removed. If the devotees moved onto the land, they would have to erect temporary housing, maybe even a temporary temple, and the land was mosquito-ridden and teeming with rats. Juhu was a small, almost isolated neighborhood, without wealthy ISKCON supporters. Although Prabhupāda (and land speculators) predicted that Juhu would grow, at present it was only a village of about two thousand. To reside at Juhu would be a drastic contrast to the comfortable Akash Ganga Building in downtown Bombay.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa explained to Prabhupāda, "We are Westerners. We cannot live like this. We need doorknobs and running water."

"Don't you want to become purified?" Prabhupāda replied.

When the Bombay devotees learned of Śrīla Prabhupāda's response to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, the words "Don't you want to become purified?" went deep into their hearts. They knew that Prabhupāda was asking them to become more austere, and that it was for their ultimate benefit. They began to regard moving to Juhu as a formidable spiritual challenge rather than a drudgery. Developing the Juhu property was important to their spiritual master, and it was something greater and more wonderful than they at present realized.

Prabhupāda knew he was asking his disciples to make a great sacrifice, but he could not avoid it. To preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a devotee had to be prepared to tolerate many difficulties. And whatever difficulties he was asking his disciples to undertake, he was prepared to undertake to a much greater degree himself. On the one hand, he didn't think that living on the undeveloped Juhu property would be too difficult for his disciples, provided they maintained cleanliness and chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa. Yet he knew that because they were Westerners, they would find it hard.

A preacher, nevertheless, had to make sacrifices—not artificially or arbitrarily, but to expand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Sometimes serving Kṛṣṇa was pleasurable, sometimes difficult. In either case, a devotee had but to do the needful, acting as a menial servant of the spiritual master.

Prabhupāda counseled his Bombay disciples, impressing on them his vision for ISKCON Bombay. Although all of them were ready to follow his decision, some of them had been feeling doubtful and weakhearted. Seeing their spiritual master's commitment to the project, however, they vowed to give up their separatist mentalities. Prabhupāda then left for Jaipur, for a week's preaching engagement at the Rādhā-Govinda temple.

* * *

Jaipur

January 12, 1972

Jaipur is an ancient city in the state of Rajasthan. Occasionally some of Prabhupāda's disciples would go there to purchase marble Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities for ISKCON temples in India and around the world. The devotees in ISKCON centers in Detroit, Toronto, Dallas, as well as throughout Europe, wanted to install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities and, with Śrīla Prabhupāda's permission, were ordering mūrtis from Jaipur.

On such an errand two women, Kauśalyā and Śrīmatī, had gone to Jaipur in January of 1972 on behalf of the New York City temple. When a government official had discovered Śrīmatī wasn't carrying her passport, the officials, suspicious of spies due to the war with Pakistan, had insisted

the women stay in town until Śrīmatī's passport arrived in the mail. Meanwhile, the girls had daily visited the Govindajī temple and had sometimes held kīrtana in the street in front of the temple. They had had daily talks with P. K. Goswami, who was in charge of the temple, as well as Jaipur businessmen and other respectable citizens (almost everyone in Jaipur regularly visits the beloved Deities of Rādhā-Govinda).

The citizens of Jaipur had been moved by the devotion of Prabhupāda's two disciples, and when one of the men had asked, "What can we do to help your movement?" the girls had replied, "Bring Śrīla Prabhupāda here." Some of Jaipur's prominent citizens had devised a plan to share expenses and responsibilities in arranging a paṇḍāl program, and the two women had sent a letter to Prabhupāda in Bombay, inviting him to come and preach. He had agreed.

At Śrīla Prabhupāda's request, devotees from Delhi and other Indian centers came to Jaipur to join him. Prabhupāda took a small room within the Govindajī temple compound, and his disciples moved into a nearby house.

Prabhupāda liked the location. The only disturbance was the many monkeys—large, charcoal-faced monkeys with long curling tails. Climbing through the trees and across the rooftops, they would scamper down unexpectedly to steal whatever they could. The women cooking for Prabhupāda were exasperated by the monkeys' bold forays to steal vegetables from the kitchen, even capātīs right off the fire, and they complained to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Neither be their friends nor their enemies," Prabhupāda advised. "If you make friends with them, they will simply be a nuisance. If you become their enemies, they will become very vindictive. Just maintain a neutral position."

The monkeys, however, continued to raid the kitchen. Again the cooks complained to Prabhupāda. "Yes," Prabhupāda said, "if you want to stop the monkeys, then this is what you must do. Purchase one bow and arrow, and shoot a monkey on the top of a tree with the arrow. And then when he falls down, take the monkey and hang him upside down by the legs to a branch of a tree. Next to him you also hang the bow and arrow. This will teach them."

Prabhupāda knew that shooting monkeys was illegal in Jaipur, and he did not expect his disciples to actually shoot them. But he delivered the advice with a serious expression. Indirectly he was advising them not to be so upset over a few monkeys.

Prabhupāda and his disciples immediately joined in the intense devotional atmosphere of Jaipur. Since the Rādhā-Govinda temple was under the jurisdiction of Jaipur's royal family, to visit the Deity daily was practically required for all citizens. Morning and evening, crowds of enthusiastic worshipers would come and go, worshiping the forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on the altar.

These were Rūpa Gosvāmī's original Rādhā-Govinda Deities from Vṛndāvana. Almost five hundred years ago, when a Mogul ruler had attacked the Govindajī temple in Vṛndāvana, the king of Jaipur had arranged for the Deities to come to Jaipur. The worshipers at the Rādhā-Govinda Mandira displayed spontaneous excitement in seeing the Deities. They would come forward, crying, "Jayo! Jayo!" "Govinda! Govinda!" And when the curtains were closing, the people would rush forward to

catch a last glimpse of the divine forms. Śrīla Prabhupāda avoided the large crowds before the Deity, keeping to his schedule of rising early and translating the Bhāgavatam.

Speaking with Kauśalyā and Śrīmatī, Prabhupāda praised them for having arranged the Jaipur paṇḍāl program. “You girls are carrying on Lord Caitanya's movement so nicely,” he said. “Just see! Even without husbands, you go on preaching.” He said that the Western women were different from Indian women, who simply stayed at home.

Then Prabhupāda discovered that his two women disciples had not actually done a thorough job. Although the paṇḍāl program was to begin in two days, no one had arranged for the large tent to be erected. Prabhupāda said it was not a woman's nature to do such organizational work. The women became morose to hear him. When they showed him the flyer they had printed advertising the festival, Prabhupāda became angry. “It is not standard,” he said. It did not say “International Society for Krishna Consciousness,” but only “A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami and his foreign disciples.”

“What is this!” Prabhupāda shouted.

“What, Śrīla Prabhupāda?” Kauśalyā asked.

“Foreign! Why do you say foreign? It must be ‘American’ and ‘European’. That is what is attractive, that they are American and European. But you are just a woman. What can I expect?” The two women began to cry and left the room.

With Śyāmasundara's help, Kauśalyā and Śrīmatī had new, corrected flyers printed and returned to tell Śrīla Prabhupāda. But now his mood had changed completely. His anger was gone. He was soft; after all, these disciples had tried their best. In a disarming disclosure, he began to explain that to be a spiritual master was difficult.

“I chastise you,” he said, “because it is my duty. Disciple is related to discipline, so it is my duty to my disciples. Otherwise, I am not upset with anyone. I simply do this to discipline you, because you are my disciples.” He consoled them, saying they were sincere and lacked expertise because of poor upbringing. The devotees present felt Śrīla Prabhupāda was wonderfully expressing to them a bit of what he, as spiritual master, felt in training them.

In a great last-minute endeavor, the devotees obtained the paṇḍāl and erected it in time for Prabhupāda to begin his program as advertised. On opening day the devotees held a parade through the streets, with Prabhupāda riding in a palanquin, a large embroidered umbrella sheltering his head. Also in the procession were decorated elephants, brass bands, and devotees—Indian, American, and European—performing kīrtana.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's first program was in the morning after the darśana of Govindajī, so as to catch the huge morning crowd. People would come hurrying into the temple to see Rādhā-Govindajī and then proceed out into the large Hare Kṛṣṇa paṇḍāl beside the temple. On the opening morning Prabhupāda performed an abhiṣekha ceremony, bathing marble Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. He named these Deities, soon to be shipped to the ISKCON temple in New York, “Rādhā-Govinda.”

After one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples had performed a fire sacrifice, Prabhupāda lectured to the crowd in Hindi. The schedule for the remaining days would be morning and evening lecture, kīrtana, and prasādam distribution.

* * *

While preaching in Jaipur, Śrīla Prabhupāda was simultaneously reflecting on and, through letters to his disciples, acting on matters in many other parts of the world. Although he participated fully, giving two lectures a day, and although he constantly met and interacted with guests, friends, and devotees, he was also absorbed in thoughts of other places and concerns. He was conducting his movement on many fronts. Wherever he happened to be at present was his "camp," just as a general makes camps in various places while conducting many battles in the overall effort of a war. His preaching in Jaipur, therefore, was only a small fraction of the scope of his worldwide mission.

From Jaipur Prabhupāda wrote his disciples in Calcutta, urging them in their development of the Māyāpur land; he wanted a grand opening ceremony by Lord Caitanya's birthday in March. Unfortunately, the government was restricting foreigners from entering Nadia, because of its proximity to Bangladesh. "Please try very hard to get those permits," Prabhupāda urged his men in Calcutta, "as we must be all assembled there for Lord Caitanya's appearance day." Repeatedly Prabhupāda mentioned his concern over the government's restricting his men.

I do not think there will be difficulty if we just go there like the ordinary pilgrims and set up our camp there for kirtan continuously. Anyone will see we are only serious devotees of Lord Chaitanya and not Pakistani spies.

Prabhupāda wrote ahead to his disciples in Nairobi, driving them onward with his blessings. "Continue to work very hard for His pleasure and all of you will go back to home, back to Godhead."

To the San Diego temple president, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote,

I am very pleased to hear from you that book sales are increasing very fast. I am hearing such good news from all over the Society, and this pleases me more than anything.

And Prabhupāda was often thinking of the land in Bombay. Sometimes he talked about it or mentioned it in a letter to his representatives there. The Bombay land purchase was still not finalized, and Prabhupāda was particularly anxious that his disciples pay the money as agreed and move immediately onto the land.

* * *

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was Śrīla Prabhupāda's Governing Body Commission secretary for India. Some of the devotees said that actually Prabhupāda was the G.B.C. secretary for India. Although he allowed his secretaries in other parts of the world to manage mostly on their own and to make their own decisions, in India he would scrutinize even small matters and make most of the decisions himself. Still, he counted on Tamāla Kṛṣṇa as his trusted assistant in important dealings. He would send

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa from one Indian center to another to help the local devotees with governmental, legal, organizational, or preaching problems.

In Bombay, just prior to coming to Jaipur, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had asked Prabhupāda's permission to take sannyāsa, the renounced order. Śrīla Prabhupāda had awarded sannyāsa to only a few men, and he had specified their duties as "traveling and preaching." Taking sannyāsa, therefore, not only meant giving up wife and family but also renouncing managerial posts. At the same time as Prabhupāda had set up his Governing Body Commission, he had also initiated several sannyāsīs, purposefully not appointing any of them, even though they were some of his most able men, as G.B.C. secretaries. The gr̥hasthas were to manage the temples as presidents and G.B.C. secretaries, and the sannyāsīs were to travel and preach. Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, had to carefully consider whether or not to give Tamāla Kṛṣṇa sannyāsa and thus lose his G.B.C. secretary for India.

On principle, Śrīla Prabhupāda liked the idea of giving Tamāla Kṛṣṇa sannyāsa. If a young man was actually qualified to give up family life and to use his intelligence and energy in preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then Prabhupāda was always ready to encourage it. The world was in dire need of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and even hundreds of sannyāsīs would still not be enough. On these grounds, how could he not appreciate the request of one of his leading disciples to take sannyāsa? But first he would test Tamāla Kṛṣṇa's determination.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was insistent. Seeing that Prabhupāda would not make a commitment, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had adopted the tactic of presenting himself before Prabhupāda early in the morning without saying a word. In Bombay he had entered Prabhupāda's room, led the maṅgala-ārati before the Deities, and then sat silently before Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Knowing the mind of his disciple, Prabhupāda could understand that Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was not only determined but obstinate. After several days of tolerating Tamāla Kṛṣṇa's silent insistent presence every morning, Prabhupāda had finally agreed to consider seriously the request.

Prabhupāda was also concerned with Mādrī-devī dāsī, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa's wife. She was an attractive, intelligent girl who had given her life to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, by his own choice, had married her only a year ago. Spiritually, Mādrī was Śrīla Prabhupāda's daughter, and Prabhupāda wanted to protect her from undue disturbance. Even as householders, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and his wife had been renounced, traveling with Prabhupāda throughout India, with little time or facility for private life as husband and wife.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had been in Bombay when Śyāmasundara had informed him that Prabhupāda had mentioned in a letter to Brahmānanda Swami in Africa that Tamāla Kṛṣṇa might take sannyāsa. Spurred on, he had left his wife in Bombay and joined Prabhupāda in Jaipur. On leaving, however, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had asked Mādrī for his personal copies of the first three volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, signed by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Mādrī had become suspicious. She had asked why he wanted them. "I just want to read them," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had answered. But she had suspected the worst: "No, you're not coming back." But assuring her that he would definitely be returning, he had left for Jaipur.

Once with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa again resumed his silent insistence. Whenever there would be an open meeting in Prabhupāda's room, the G.B.C. leaders would usually sit in a privileged position near Prabhupāda, so as to best receive direct instruction. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, however, would simply sit outside the door. The first time he did this, Prabhupāda looked up and said, "Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, you are sitting outside? That is very nice," and the other devotees took it that Prabhupāda was praising his disciple's humility.

When on one occasion Prabhupāda addressed Tamāla Kṛṣṇa as "Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja," the devotees were startled. The women devotees in Jaipur, being close friends with Mādrī, became angry at what they took to be Tamāla Kṛṣṇa's duplicity.

Although Prabhupāda had not given permission, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa went ahead with his plans, even to the point of preparing his sannyāsa-daṇḍa and dying his clothes. The women were outraged; Mādrī was not even there to represent herself. All together the women went to see Śrīla Prabhupāda, who patiently and sympathetically heard their presentation.

Then Prabhupāda called for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and said, "Your wife is my daughter, my disciple, and I have to think for her also. So I do not know how I can do this, because she will be in great difficulty." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa argued, but Prabhupāda pacified him and asked him to be patient. The sannyāsa issue had become a topic of controversy among the devotees in Jaipur. The men were rooting for sannyāsa, and the women were opposed. Prabhupāda, however, remained grave.

Throughout the week-long festival large crowds continued to come for Prabhupāda's morning and evening lectures. Prabhupāda would chant prayers from *Brahma-saṁhitā* and then lecture in Hindi. Not only did the citizens of Jaipur honor Prabhupāda, but they honored his disciples also. Here, more than in most other Indian cities, the devotees were treated not as foreigners or outsiders but as sādhus. "This whole city is made of devotees of Rādhā-Govindajī," Prabhupāda commented. The police chief, who visited often, was cordial and respectful. As Prabhupāda and his disciples went from place to place in Jaipur during the day, policemen would salute them, halting traffic to let them pass. People invited Śrīla Prabhupāda to their homes, and they treated him like a king.

Prabhupāda had also asked several women devotees to carefully observe the Deity worship in Jaipur. They informed him they had observed that every night the Deities were dressed in night clothes and that Their clothes were also changed at two other times, in the morning and in the afternoon. The women told Prabhupāda how a priest offered the Deities scented oils on cotton-tipped sticks, which the priests would later offer, along with flower garlands from the Deities, to the incoming worshipers in exchange for fresh garlands. These devotional practices were standard, Prabhupāda said, and could be introduced throughout ISKCON.

Each evening Prabhupāda spoke at the paṇḍāl, and often a respectable Jaipur citizen would introduce him. When the queen of Jaipur introduced him one evening, she expressed her devotional sentiments for Prabhupāda and his movement.

After lecturing each evening, Prabhupāda would stay for a slide show of ISKCON's activities around the world. One night during the slide show, Śrīla Prabhupāda called Tamāla Kṛṣṇa over beside his vyāsāsana. "Taking sannyāsa will be difficult now," he said softly. "Your wife will suffer too much."

He sat back a moment while Tamāla Kṛṣṇa took in what he had said. Then Tamāla Kṛṣṇa leaned forward and said with determination, "One way or another, Śrīla Prabhupāda, she's going to suffer. Either she'll suffer now when I take sannyāsa, or if I take sannyāsa later on, she will be just as unhappy. There will never be a time when she'll want me to. So since the feeling is going to be the same, it might as well come now. Free me. She'll get over it."

Prabhupāda said no more, but he remained thoughtful. Later that night after the paṇḍāl program, he called for his sannyāsī disciples, Subala, Madhudviṣa, Gargamuni, and Devānanda, and for his personal secretary, Śyāmasundara. Gathering them together along with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, he said, "Tamāla Kṛṣṇa wants to take sannyāsa. So what is your opinion? Should he take or not?"

Everyone agreed he should. Finally, Prabhupāda consented. "You will have to prepare things," he said.

"Things are prepared already," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said.

"Then," said Prabhupāda, "tomorrow morning we must have the ceremony."

The next morning Prabhupāda performed a special ceremony in the paṇḍāl, lighting the sacrificial fire and offering Tamāla Kṛṣṇa the sannyāsa-daṇḍa. The women were angry with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, but it was too late.

After the ceremony Prabhupāda called Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja to his room. "You have given up a very good wife and a high position. Therefore I am giving you the title Gosvāmī. Now you have to be in the same mood as the Gosvāmīs, being able to preach all over the world and accept disciples." Suddenly Prabhupāda began to laugh. "I have been testing you," he said, "to see whether or not you were determined. So what will you do?"

"I thought I would go with my daṇḍa," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, "and, without anybody else, simply wander from city to city in India and preach about Kṛṣṇa, without any vehicle or anything, just like Lord Caitanya did."

"Very good," Prabhupāda said. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja offered obeisances and walked out.

Scarcely an hour later, however, Prabhupāda called him back. "This is not a very good proposal," he said. "If you want to do something, you should have some assistants and facilities at your disposal." Prabhupāda then assigned a couple of brahmacārīs to go with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja for preaching. He also gave his new sannyāsī his first assignment. Immediately after Jaipur, Prabhupāda was planning to go to a festival in Nairobi, Africa, yet in Ahmedabad another program awaited him. "You go on my behalf to Ahmedabad," said Prabhupāda.

At Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's sannyāsa initiation, Śrīla Prabhupāda had given him the sannyāsa-mantra, a verse that describes the surrendered, devotional attitude of the Vaiṣṇava sannyāsī. Vaiṣṇava sannyāsa emphasizes engaging one's body, mind, and words in ecstatic service to Kṛṣṇa, as distinguished from the sannyāsa of the impersonalists, who speculate on Brahman or sit alone in

silent meditation. The Vaiṣṇava sannyāsī, by taking shelter of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, crosses the ocean of nescience and brings others across with him.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda was demonstrating, a Vaiṣṇava sannyāsī should travel all over the world, working with all his might to reclaim the fallen souls on behalf of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Vaiṣṇava sannyāsa meant coming to places like Jaipur and preaching. It meant worshiping Govindajī in the temple, and it meant sending Rādhā-Govinda to be worshiped by the devotees in New York City. It meant allowing women an equal opportunity to become pure devotees in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And it meant separating a man from his wife for the higher purpose of sannyāsa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, although beyond the varṇāśrama designation of sannyāsa, was nevertheless the best sannyāsī and the creator of many other sannyāsīs, whom he instructed to follow in his footsteps. He said his sannyāsīs should do even more than he—make more followers, publish more books, and establish more ISKCON centers.

* * *

Bombay

January 24, 1972

On returning to Bombay, Prabhupāda was disappointed to find that the devotees had neither paid Mr. N. nor moved to Juhu. Madhudviṣa Swami, whom Prabhupāda had put in charge, frankly admitted his inability to accept the responsibility for such a difficult project. The disciple Prabhupāda had originally deputed to handle such affairs was Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja. But now that he had taken sannyāsa, he had renounced his G.B.C. duties for traveling and preaching, and Prabhupāda was without a manager for Bombay. Already Prabhupāda was doing most of the managing, but he couldn't do everything—he couldn't stay constantly in Bombay.

Searching for a veteran disciple to manage Juhu, Prabhupāda thought of Brahmānanda Swami, who was still preaching in Nairobi. Prabhupāda decided to fly to Africa and invite Brahmānanda Swami to come and manage Bombay. He wanted to act swiftly, so that ISKCON could take possession of the land. Even if Mr. N. changed his mind later, once the devotees were living on the land, getting them to leave would be very difficult for him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda planned to fly to Nairobi immediately, and he wanted to carry large Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities with him. The Deities he had previously sent to Nairobi had been broken in shipping, so this time Prabhupāda brought with him strong-bodied Madhudviṣa Swami to carry the thirty-six-inch marble Deities. With special permission from the airlines, Prabhupāda boarded, followed by Madhudviṣa Swami, who held in his arms the one-hundred-pound Deity of Kṛṣṇa. After setting Kṛṣṇa in place beside Prabhupāda's seat, Madhudviṣa Swami left the plane and came back carrying Rādhārāṇī.

Prabhupāda passed most of the flight debating with Madhudviṣa Swami, who took the position of the impersonalist. Prabhupāda would always defeat him. "This is how you become a preacher,"

Prabhupāda said. "You must be able to take both sides of the argument and defeat your adversary. This is what Lord Caitanya would do."

Since Prabhupāda's first visit to Nairobi four months ago, Brahmānanda Swami and a few American devotees had rented a house near the city. They had recruited some African devotees but had not yet developed the temple and āśrama. Barely able to maintain their own simple program, they were unprepared to receive Śrīla Prabhupāda properly.

Typical of Prabhupāda's stay in Nairobi was his arrival: no one was at the airport to meet him. The devotees were not even sure if Prabhupāda was coming. Prabhupāda's secretary had phoned Brahmānanda Swami that Prabhupāda was willing to come to Kenya but that Brahmānanda Swami should try to arrange a meeting with the president and schedule a big paṇḍāl festival. Brahmānanda Swami, however, had never received a clear message of when Prabhupāda was coming.

At the airport Prabhupāda and Madhudviṣa Swami carefully put the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities into a taxicab and rode with Them to the address of the ISKCON center. Prabhupāda rang the doorbell, and when Brahmānanda Swami opened the door and saw his spiritual master, he cried out, "Prabhupāda!" and bowed down.

"What happened?" Prabhupāda asked, standing beside Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. "Why no one came to pick us up at the airport?" Brahmānanda Swami was unable to reply.

No sooner did Prabhupāda arrive than his assistant, Madhudviṣa Swami, became bedridden with hepatitis. Prabhupāda had left his regular secretary, Śyāmasundara, in India to work on a legal case concerning the Māyāpur land, so he was now without a personal assistant.

In Nairobi Prabhupāda followed his usual schedule of bathing in the afternoon and then putting on fresh clothes, but one day after his bath he found that no clothes were ready. When he asked for them, Brahmānanda Swami explained that the African servant had washed them and put them on the line to dry. But when Brahmānanda Swami had gone to get them, they hadn't been there; apparently someone had stolen them from the clothesline. Prabhupāda tolerated the inconvenience without any display of emotion.

That evening, when the devotees of ISKCON Nairobi gathered in the temple to hear Prabhupāda speak from Bhagavad-gītā, Prabhupāda saw the different items of stolen clothing on the African boys; one boy wore the kurtā, another the top piece, and another the dhotī. Prabhupāda pointed this out to Brahmānanda Swami, who immediately took the boys out and retrieved the clothing from them. When Brahmānanda Swami returned the clothes, Prabhupāda didn't seem to take the offense seriously, but only laughed.

Prabhupāda did not laugh, however, at the Nairobi devotees' bad cooking. When they served him white maize mush, he called it pig food, and the hard, white chickpeas, he said, were suitable only for horses. Then Harikṛpā, a black devotee from America, went to the kitchen, boiled some vegetables, and served them to Prabhupāda without any spicing. Prabhupāda called it dog food. "You are still an uneducated African," he told Harikṛpā. And he went into the kitchen to cook for himself. Almost a dozen devotees joined him, watching him cook a complete meal of dāl, rice,

capātīs, and sabjī. He cooked enough for all the devotees, and everyone was satisfied. Bad cooking and stolen clothing, however, continued to be problems during Prabhupāda's week-long stay in Nairobi.

Brahmānanda Swami found that Prabhupāda was mostly absorbed in his Bombay project. "The only reason I've come," Śrīla Prabhupāda told Brahmānanda Swami, "is to get you for this." Once he asked Brahmānanda Swami, "Which is the most important city in India?"

"Calcutta?" Brahmānanda replied.

"Calcutta?" Prabhupāda looked at him oddly. "Don't you know Bombay is number one? Delhi is number two, and Calcutta is number three."

Prabhupāda encouraged Brahmānanda Swami to return with him and take charge of the Bombay project. This Bombay project, he said, would be unique within ISKCON, incorporating the religious with the cultural in a gorgeous temple, international hotel, theater, and diorama exhibition. Seeing Prabhupāda's strong desire, Brahmānanda Mahārāja agreed to somehow relinquish his Nairobi responsibilities to others and help in Bombay.

In yet another way Prabhupāda's visit to Nairobi connected with his Bombay project. When Brahmānanda Swami and Cyavana showed Prabhupāda the Nairobi Hilton, a modern building with twin round towers, Prabhupāda liked the design and wanted to give it to his architect for the Bombay hotel and temple.

Prabhupāda, Brahmānanda Swami, Bhāgavata, and an African devotee were walking in Nairobi's public gardens. On being introduced to Prabhupāda, the African had inquired, "If I want to, can I get married?"

"Oh, yes," said Prabhupāda.

"But Prabhupāda," the boy continued, "if you want to get married in our community, the boy has to pay money to the father of the bride."

This was exactly opposite the Vedic system, Prabhupāda replied, wherein the father of the bride presents a dowry to his son-in-law. Hearing this, Prabhupāda's new disciple looked worried. He asked, "Then, will you give me money when I want to get my wife? Because I'm not working now, I'm just working for you. When I want to get my wife, will you give me money?"

Prabhupāda shook his head. "You don't worry about all of this," he said "—whether you'll get a wife, or whether you will get money, or this or that. Later on, when it is time for you to get married, I will bring one American girl, and you will marry her."

Wherever Prabhupāda turned in his fledgling Nairobi temple, he found neophyte disciples and discrepancies. Walking into the brahmacārī āśrama, he found books, boards, and paint cans

scattered about the room. When he said things should be kept more neatly and orderly, the temple commander, Harikṛpā, replied, "Prabhupāda, I try to tell them, but these boys don't listen to me."

Prabhupāda bent down and picked up some pieces of wood. "If they don't do it," he said, "then you should do it! Put these over here." And Prabhupāda began engaging all the men present. Within five minutes the room was neat.

The World Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement Festival at Nairobi's City Stadium was a combination success and failure. Although Brahmānanda Swami had managed to see many highly posted government officials and diplomats, many of whom had promised to attend the festival, none of them actually appeared—except for Mr. Y. Komora, Kenya's director of education. But an audience of several hundred attended kīrtana, heard Prabhupāda's speech, and took prasādam.

Although the devotees had invited the leading Kenyan citizens to enhance the glorification of Kṛṣṇa, their honored guest, Mr. Komora, used the opportunity to speak in praise of Kenya. Nevertheless, he spoke highly of Prabhupāda and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Regarding Bhagavad-gītā, he said, "Your learned founder has made this great book available in the English tradition with an erudite commentary."

Śrīla Prabhupāda also attended other engagements in and around Nairobi. He told his Nairobi disciples that in preaching to the Africans they should stress the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa by holding public kīrtanas. Lord Caitanya, he said, spoke philosophy only with learned scholars like Sanātana and Rūpa Gosvāmī, never with ordinary men. "Just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa," he said. "This should be appreciated."

Śrīla Prabhupāda installed the Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and named the Nairobi temple Kirāta-śuddhi, "a place for purifying the aborigines." One day shortly after the Deity installation, however, Prabhupāda walked into the temple room and was shocked to find the Deities out of Their proper place in the center of the altar. Kṛṣṇa was standing to the far left beside the bottom step leading up to the altar, and Rādhārāṇī stood to the far right.

"Who has done this?" Prabhupāda called out loudly. Bhāgavata came running into the temple room. He also was astonished.

"Who has put Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa ten miles apart?" Prabhupāda demanded. "Don't you know these things? How many times do I have to teach you?"

Bhūta-bhāvana suddenly appeared, admitting that he was the culprit. "Why are They so far apart?" Prabhupāda asked.

"I don't know, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Bhūta-bhāvana. "I guess I just forgot. I was being rushed to go to the festival."

"So," Prabhupāda demanded, "does that mean They should be put out in the street?" Bhūta-bhāvana froze, unable to reply. Prabhupāda relented. "Take Them and put Them together," he said. "They should not be moved more than three inches apart. Now do it nicely."

After a week Prabhupāda left Nairobi and returned to Bombay. He had gone there to get Brahmānanda Swami. And he had accomplished his mission. "Unless you agreed to take charge," Prabhupāda said, "I could not go ahead and pay so much money. Now it is decided." He felt new hope.

Prabhupāda envisioned his Bombay project as extraordinary within ISKCON and even among all the temples of India. Many of the details of the project already existed within his mind, but he needed competent disciples to carry them out. He was still the lone leader of ISKCON, forging ahead to bring into reality new phases of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. His disciples were behind him, but it was always he who led. Even when he wanted his disciples as leaders of various ISKCON projects, they sometimes could not handle the responsibility. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda had gone to Nairobi in the mood of the Bengali aphorism he sometimes quoted: "If you want to accomplish a thing, do it by your own hand." So by his own hand he had brought Brahmānanda Swami from Nairobi to Bombay. And simultaneously he had benefited the devotees and the general populace of Nairobi.

* * *

Bombay

February 8, 1972

Prabhupāda met with Mr. N. and reiterated that he wanted to move onto the land as soon as Mr. N. received the second fifty thousand rupees. Mr. N. stood firm on their agreement, and Prabhupāda put the matter into the hands of his lawyer, Mr. D., for legal processing.

Although Prabhupāda was making all the managerial decisions, he wanted the G.B.C. secretaries to take on the responsibility for these practical affairs. He thought it better to use his energy in writing and translating books. "If you G.B.C. do everything nicely," he told his secretary Śyāmasundara, "then my brain will not be taxed and I can utilize my time completely to produce further books. I can give you Vedas, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa—so many. There are so many devotional works in our line by the Gosvāmīs. This administrative work is taking too much time. I could be discussing philosophy. My brain is being taxed day and night. Because of this I'm neglecting my real work."

Aside from directly managing the Indian projects, Prabhupāda was answering as many as a dozen letters daily from devotees around the world. "Why do they keep writing, asking so many questions?" he asked his secretary.

"The devotees prefer to ask you personally," Śyāmasundara said, "because their G.B.C. men don't always know the right answer."

"They know everything by now," Prabhupāda replied. "I have given you everything. If they don't know the answer, they can find it in my books. Now I am an old man. Let me settle down to

philosophy. All day reading letters, doing business, all night signing letters—this is not right. I want to be free from these things. The G.B.C. can do everything now."

But it wasn't possible. As soon as Prabhupāda would sense that one of his devotees was being cheated, he would immediately become actively involved. And his disciples continued to write him regarding important business and managerial decisions. Nor would he discourage them. His desire for retirement and exclusive literary work remained, but it seemed to be only a wishful thought, a dream. If ISKCON were to develop, then there seemed little scope for his retirement.

After the meeting with Mr. N., Prabhupāda prepared to leave for South India for a five-day paṇḍāl program in Madras; also on his itinerary were visits to Calcutta, Māyāpur, and Vṛndāvana. As he prepared to leave Bombay he felt happy that ISKCON would soon occupy the new Juhu property, and he frequently spoke of his plans.

ISKCON would erect a fabulous temple and form a cooperative housing society of devotees of Kṛṣṇa—the first ISKCON city. Respectable men would purchase flats in ISKCON's highrise condominium. Devotees would have to become expert to develop and operate such a complex, and as they became successful, they would introduce the same pattern in other cities. Businessmen and professional workers could live as devotees in a co-op society, housing their families and sending their children to an ISKCON school.

Prabhupāda repeatedly talked of constructing an international hotel, somewhat like a Holiday Inn, suitable for foreigners and traveling businessmen, yet reserving a floor for ISKCON life members, who would receive free accommodations. The restaurant would be managed by expert brāhmaṇa cooks, who would prepare dozens of different prepa rations of sumptuous prasādam. The Deities Rādhā-Rāsavihārī would receive fifty-two offerings daily, and the prasādam would be distributed to residents and guests.

To start things in the right direction, Prabhupāda ordered the devotees to immediately arrange for a ten-day public festival on the new land. First Brahmānanda Swami should pay the agreed balance and move onto the land along with all the devotees and the Deities, Rādhā-Rāsavihārī. Then they should prepare a big paṇḍāl tent and arrange a full program as they had previously in Bombay, in Calcutta, and in Delhi. Prabhupāda wanted everything ready for his return in two weeks.

* * *

Although, as Prabhupāda would sometimes mention, in South India the original Vedic culture was most intact, he had not been there in several years. Most of the great ācāryas, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva, had come from South India, and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, during His own touring, had found South India especially favorable.

Just after the Hare Kṛṣṇa paṇḍāl festival in Delhi, on the eve of Prabhupāda's first tour of Vṛndāvana with his disciples, back in November of 1971, Acyutānanda Swami, Brahmānanda Swami, and Girirāja had volunteered to go to Madras to arrange a preaching program for Śrīla Prabhupāda. When Acyutānanda Swami had informed Prabhupāda of the plan, Prabhupāda had asked, "Oh, you are not going to Vṛndāvana with us?"

"ISKCON is Vṛndāvana," Acyutananda Swami had replied.

"Yes," Prabhupāda had said, "my Guru Mahārāja used to think like that."

"But which do you want us to do?" Girirāja had asked. "What is the better service?"

"I want to put on a paṇḍāl in Madras," Prabhupāda had replied. "That would be more pleasing."

Madras

February 11, 1972

Prabhupāda, accompanied by twenty disciples, arrived in Madras and immediately took part in a parade through the streets. The parade, led by a decorated elephant and a marching band, followed by the devotees' kīrtana, featured Prabhupāda riding in an old, flower-covered American limousine.

Prabhupāda stayed as the guest of Mr. Balu, a Madras businessman. For three nights in the large hall packed with five thousand people, Prabhupāda lectured in English. One evening he told a story from the Caitanya-caritāmṛta of an illiterate South Indian brāhmaṇa whom Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu recognized for his staunch devotion to his spiritual master and to the Bhagavad-gītā. The next morning and each subsequent morning The Hindu, one of Madras's two leading newspapers, printed a full summary of Prabhupāda's lecture. The other principal newspaper gave a more general account of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's arrival and the parade with his Western followers.

The large three-day program was followed by a more select gathering, sponsored by Mr. K. Vira Swami, the chief justice of Madras. Attending the function were judges, lawyers, and other leading citizens of the city. Several thousand people gathered beneath the open pavilion as Prabhupāda spoke about Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī of Vṛndāvana, who had given up their important government positions to join the movement of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Indirectly, Prabhupāda was requesting all the attending leaders of Madras to join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Prabhupāda was aware that his audience, although respectful, was steeped in impersonalism—deep-seated conviction that impersonal Brahman was supreme and that all Hindu gods were equal manifestations of the One. And Prabhupāda ended his talk by imploring his audience to accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "Just repeat," he said, " 'Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.' " His appeal was so urgent and humble that some members of the audience actually repeated aloud, "Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead." The Hindu's editor and publisher, Mr. Kasturi, was in attendance, and he printed a detailed summary of Prabhupāda's speech in the next day's paper.

In addition to the usual news coverage, Śrīla Prabhupāda held a press conference at a Madras hotel. Already happy with the press coverage, he appealed further to the roomful of reporters.

Girirāja: Prabhupāda wasn't speaking to them as if they were newspaper reporters. Usually a newspaper reporter has a stereotyped idea of who he is, and you giving an interview, so you have your stereotyped idea of who you are. And you answer his questions, thinking of how it will be published. But I could see that Prabhupāda was speaking to these reporters as spirit souls, as individual persons who are meant to be devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Even though they were addressing him as newspaper reporters, he was answering them in a completely different way. He was encouraging them and saying, "This reporting that you have done is very nice. Kṛṣṇa will bless you. Please help spread this movement." They were asking questions, thinking of his answers in terms of something to publish in the newspapers. But Prabhupāda took it that they were spirit souls reaching out toward Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he answered in that way.

Within a few days of Prabhupāda's arrival, the whole city was feeling the presence of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Prabhupāda scarcely slept, using the early-morning hours for translating, even after his late-night speaking engagements. He would go from place to place all day with great vitality, outdoing his young followers.

Prabhupāda's host, Mr. Balu, although a prominent businessman, was also well known as a religious man. He received Prabhupāda warmly and respectfully, according to proper Vedic etiquette. Prabhupāda noted that Mr. Balu had his own temple with beautiful Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities and a large tulasī plant. When the devotees accompanying Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Mr. Balu why the Deities were often dressed in black, he replied that They were so effulgent that if he didn't dress Them in black he wouldn't be able to look on Them. He did not make prostrated obeisances to his Deity because he and his wife were Kṛṣṇa's father and mother, he said, and how can the father pay obeisances to his son?

Prabhupāda and his host related to each other graciously. But one night Mr. Balu and his wife came to Śrīla Prabhupāda and asked him to please speak about the rāsa-līlā* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda replied that the rāsa-līlā, being the most exalted spiritual topic, was meant only for liberated souls. Only one completely free of material desires, Prabhupāda explained, was fit to hear the rāsa-līlā.

"No, Swamiji," Mr. Balu insisted. "My wife and I are very keen. You must recite rāsa-līlā."

Again Prabhupāda described the exalted position of the rāsa dance, repeating that only when one is completely free of all material attachments to wife, family, home, and money could he become fit to hear of Kṛṣṇa's rāsa dance. Mr. Balu then folded his hands and politely repeated, "Swamiji, my wife and I plead with you. Please recite rāsa-līlā."

Then Prabhupāda replied, "Well, you may be fit to hear rāsa-līlā, but I do not feel that I am qualified to speak it. So kindly ask someone else."

Prabhupāda met privately with various important citizens of Madras. If the leaders of society became Kṛṣṇa conscious, he would explain, then they, by their example, would create Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the general populace. Never compromising, never flattering his important visitors, he tried to impart Kṛṣṇa consciousness to whomever he met.

He met with the governor of Madras, K. K. Shah, a staunch Māyāvādī and follower of Śaṅkarācārya. Patiently Prabhupāda tried to teach him Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but the governor would interrupt with his own philosophy. When Prabhupāda asked him to somehow help the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, the man replied that as governor there was nothing he could do, since everything was in the hands of the chief minister.

Residing in Madras was an elderly scholar and former leading politician who had written several books and translations of Vedic philosophy from the impersonalist point of view. Prabhupāda visited him, but the man was paralyzed and could only sit, trembling, without speaking. Prabhupāda spoke for some time about personalism in the Gītā. The old scholar sometimes responded with a glimmer in his eye, but he could only make incoherent sounds. Previously Prabhupāda had criticized this man's translation of the Gītā, which declares that although Kṛṣṇa says surrender unto Him, we don't actually have to surrender unto the person Kṛṣṇa but to the impersonal, eternal principle within Kṛṣṇa. The meeting seemed to have a strong effect on Śrīla Prabhupāda, and for days afterward he would sometimes soberly mention how the old Māyāvādī scholar was living almost like a vegetable.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also met with V. Raj Gopala Acarya (Rajaji), who had been India's first chief executive after independence. A friend of Mahatma Gandhi, Rajaji was high in the public sentiment as a religious politician. Although in his nineties, he was alert and very sympathetic to Prabhupāda's movement. Rajaji expressed only one doubt: Prabhupāda had created such a huge institution that now his disciples might identify with the institution rather than with Kṛṣṇa. If that were to happen, then by identifying with the institution they would again fall into the same type of materialism or false identification as before. Prabhupāda replied that because Kṛṣṇa is absolute, Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's institution are nondifferent. To identify with Kṛṣṇa's institution was to identify with Kṛṣṇa directly. Rajaji was satisfied by Prabhupāda's answer, and after a pleasant conversation the two friends parted.

Prabhupāda received an invitation to Chief Justice Vira Swami's home. The two became friends, and the chief justice requested to join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as soon as possible. He liked Prabhupāda's followers, especially three-year-old Sarasvatī, and gave her a six-inch silver mūrti of Kṛṣṇa playing the flute.

Another evening, Mr. Vira Swami came to see Prabhupāda, and Prabhupāda mentioned that he thought Sarasvatī too young to have such a valuable silver mūrti and that he had taken it from her and was going to give her another one. But while they were talking, Sarasvatī burst into the room and ran to her mother, crying, "Kṛṣṇa is gone!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda then called her forward and asked, "Sarasvatī, where is Kṛṣṇa?"

In anxiety, Sarasvatī replied, "I don't know. Someone took Him."

Prabhupāda repeated, "But where is Kṛṣṇa?"

Sarasvatī replied, "I don't know."

"Is He under the cushion?" Prabhupāda suggested. And Sarasvatī ran over to the cushion Prabhupāda pointed to. She picked it up, but Kṛṣṇa was not there.

"Is He on the shelf?" Prabhupāda asked. Sarasvatī ran to the shelf. Her eyes darted in all directions.

"Where is Kṛṣṇa?" Sarasvatī began appealing to the faces of the devotees, glancing at their hands, looking behind their backs, searching everywhere.

Prabhupāda, intently watching Sarasvatī, began reciting a verse about the six Gosvāmīs: he rādhe vraja-devike ca lalite he nanda-suno kutaḥ. "This is the mood of the Gosvāmīs," he said. "They never said, 'Now I have seen God. Now I am satisfied.' No, rather they were saying, 'Where is Rādhā? Where is Kṛṣṇa? Where are You all now? Are You on Govardhana, or are You under the trees on the bank of the Yamunā? Where are You?' In this way they expressed their moods of Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Sarasvatī's anxiety had become heightened to the point of tears. One of the devotees then hinted, "Sarasvatī, where is Kṛṣṇa? Who has Kṛṣṇa?" Sarasvatī's eyes widened. She exclaimed, "Prabhupāda has Kṛṣṇa!" and she rushed up to Prabhupāda, convinced that he was holding Kṛṣṇa. And Prabhupāda reached behind his seat and pulled out a small Kṛṣṇa mūrti similar to the silver Kṛṣṇa he had taken from her.

"Here is Kṛṣṇa, Sarasvatī" Prabhupāda said. Sarasvatī was in ecstasy. All the devotees were struck by Prabhupāda's exchange of devotional feelings with even a small child; by his expertise he had created within her a mood of separation from Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda continued explaining to the chief justice about the mood of separation from Kṛṣṇa.

For centuries certain religious and social controversies had divided Madras, and Prabhupāda often addressed these issues. One conflict was between the brāhmaṇas and the non-brāhmaṇas. Because those born in brāhmaṇa families had traditionally monopolized the important governmental, social, and religious posts, the non-brāhmaṇas had developed a powerful political opposition, passing laws banning such things as religious pictures. In their mundane political conception of the sacred Rāmāyaṇa, they had even committed offenses to the Deities of Lord Rāma.

In talking with his disciples, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "The chief justice is brāhmaṇa? I don't think so. He may be a kṣatriya. But you can tell him that we can solve the whole problem between the brāhmaṇas and the non-brāhmaṇas. We will give facility that anyone can become a brāhmaṇa. He simply has to follow our principles, and we will make him a brāhmaṇa." Prabhupāda said the śāstra states that in Kali-yuga the demons will take birth as brāhmaṇas, thus this deep controversy. The so-called brāhmaṇas, the leaders, were not satisfying the people. Prabhupāda said that anyone who followed the four regulative principles, chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, and took Vaiṣṇava initiation could become a brāhmaṇa, and that would solve the whole problem.

They should begin, Prabhupāda said, by making Chief Justice Vira Swami a brāhmaṇa. Mr. Vira Swami admitted that he was already eager to take initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda; his only difficulty was giving up tea-drinking. When Prabhupāda heard this, he said that even if the justice did drink a little tea, he would accept him—as an exceptional case.

Some of Madras's caste-conscious brāhmaṇas criticized Śrīla Prabhupāda's creating brāhmaṇas from low-born Westerners. During a gathering at the home of a Madrasi brāhmaṇa, one of the guests commented to Prabhupāda, "Swamiji, your disciples don't pronounce the Sanskrit very nicely. Even the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra they sometimes do not say correctly."

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, "that is why we have come here—to get your association so you can teach us."

Śrīla Prabhupāda encountered another long-standing South Indian feud—between the Śaivites (followers of Lord Śiva) and the Vaiṣṇavas (followers of Lord Viṣṇu). The Śaivites generally espoused an impersonalistic philosophy, declaring God to be the Impersonal One appearing in many forms, such as Śiva and Kṛṣṇa. But since all the forms were one ultimately, fighting as to which god was best was petty and childish. Prabhupāda's disciples found this philosophy difficult to deal with, and when Girirāja had argued with a wealthy Śaivite, Mr. Ramakrishna, they had separated with hurt feelings. But in meetings with other persons in Madras, Girirāja was often reminded, "Have you met Mr. Ramakrishna? He is a very good man and a leader in religious functions." Girirāja became embarrassed and decided to make another attempt to win Mr. Ramakrishna's friendship.

They talked again, but remained unsatisfied. Girirāja then informed Prabhupāda and asked if he would meet Mr. Ramakrishna himself. Prabhupāda agreed.

When they met, Mr. Ramakrishna began by saying, "Swamiji, we have been having some discussion about devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa and devotion to Lord Śiva. What do you say? Who is greater? Kṛṣṇa or Śiva?"

Prabhupāda replied that actually the word bhakti, or "devotion," could not properly be applied to the worship of Lord Śiva. Bhakti, he said, meant service without any material desire, whereas pūjā included service with the desire for some return. Bhakti, therefore, could only be applied to Kṛṣṇa.

"But isn't it possible," asked Mr. Ramakrishna, "for someone to be a bhakta of Lord Śiva and to worship Lord Śiva simply out of devotion, without desiring any material benefit?"

"It may be possible," Prabhupāda replied, "but generally not. Just like when a person enters a liquor shop, generally it's taken that he is going for drinking, although there may be some exception."

Prabhupāda gave the example of the gopīs' worship of the goddess Kātyāyanī; their worship had not been for material benefit but for devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, if one worshiped Lord Śiva with the aim of serving Lord Kṛṣṇa, that would be bhakti. But people generally approach Śiva for material benefit. Although Mr. Ramakrishna was usually prone to argue these points, Prabhupāda's answer satisfied him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's most acute controversy in Madras was not with smārta-brāhmaṇas, Māyāvādīs, or Śaivites, but with some of his own Godbrothers. Although some of them acknowledged Śrīla Prabhupāda's incomparable preaching in the West on behalf of their spiritual master, Śrīla

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, others were envious. One envious Godbrother wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda in Madras.

Reverend Swamiji,

I listened to your discourse on Bhakti at Rajiswari Kalayana Mandapam on the 12th instant. I am filled with doubts on the following:

Your disciples dance with Hare Krishna mantram, (I) are they really God-intoxicated as Lord Chaitanya (II) Have you Swamiji really got free of your ego? If so, why you said, "I challenge," and why are words like "I" and "my" always on your lips? (III) Why do you use a cushion unlike a real yogi—Did Lord Chaitanya use cushions? (IV) Why do you wear ring and a wrist gold watch? Are you not free from material attachment? (V) Did you visit Lord Chaitanya Krishna Temple at Gaudiya Math? If not, why not—The purest Vaishnava cult is indwelling there with pious Swamijis with Lord Krishna dwelling therein. Melodious sound from your throat is absent but a jarceing [sic] undivine comes out. Is there any divinity in your person? I doubt. One disgusted on hearing your speech.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda was surprised and hurt by the extreme virulence of such a letter, he was accustomed to his Godbrothers' slights and insults. He forbade his disciples, however, to get involved in fights with his Godbrothers. Rather, they should simply avoid them. He said that persons who criticize the spreading of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement were useless and that he would push on: "The dogs may bark, but the caravan will pass."

In contrast to the venomous letter came a letter from Tridaṇḍī Svāmī B.V. Purī Mahārāja, another of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers. Purī Mahārāja, as Prabhupāda called him, had a small āśrama in Visakhapatnam, on the Bay of Bengal between Madras and Calcutta. Hearing that Prabhupāda was going next to Calcutta, Purī Mahārāja invited him to visit.

With innumerable Satsanga Dandabats at Thy lotus feet, I beg to acknowledge the kind letter... The citizens of Visakhapatnam are very anxious to have the darshan of your holiness... We are exceedingly glad and eager to hear Sankirtana and the divine message from your holy lips. I hope the Sankirtana movement at Madras is attracting thousands of citizens. Again, with dandabats to all the Vaishnavas, I remain dasanu B.V. Purī.

* * *

Visakhapatnam

February 17, 1972

A broad beach of white sparkling sands and the Bay of Bengal's warm, clear waters were special features of Śrīla Prabhupāda's visit to Visakhapatnam. Purī Mahārāja's small āśrama, where Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed, was only five minutes from the ocean, and every morning Prabhupāda and his entourage of about fifteen devotees would take long walks along the seashore.

Yamunā: I don't think Prabhupāda ever excluded any of us from going with him to the beach. All the devotees knew at which time Śrīla Prabhupāda would be taking his walk, and we would come out from our different quarters and follow him to the seashore. The walks were brisk and refreshing and full of talk about Kṛṣṇa. Somehow or other, we were all able to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda speak.

Guru dāsa: I always went on every morning walk. But one time I was sitting in the temple, when suddenly I saw Prabhupāda and the devotees going toward the beach. I immediately ran out of the temple to join them, without even taking time to get my shoes. But there were barnacles and rocks leading down to the beach. When Prabhupāda saw me coming, lifting my feet up high, painfully hobbling down the rough road, he looked over and said, "Oh, your feet are hurting? Why aren't you wearing shoes?" And I said, "Prabhupāda, when I'm with you, I don't feel any pain." Prabhupāda stopped and said, "Then why don't you cut your throat?" Everyone laughed, and I laughed also. He said, "There is enough tapasya. Why create your own?"

Gurukṛpā: Prabhupāda would talk philosophy on and on. There were many things I couldn't understand. I would just listen anyway, although I couldn't remember anything. I would just hear and hear, but it hadn't registered yet. I used to walk behind him on the beach, and I figured that, "If I can't follow his teachings or example yet, at least let me step in his footsteps in the sand."

Viśakhā: Sometimes a dog would try to follow us or would bark at us. We were all surprised to see how Prabhupāda would flick his cane and the dog would run away. Once when we passed a cow on the road, Prabhupāda gave her ample room to pass, and he told us the story of how he had been gored by a cow shortly after he had taken sannyāsa.

Tejās: Once on a morning walk Prabhupāda was speaking about the dog. He gave a reference to a śloka by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita about the five good qualities of a dog—that he is very faithful and satisfied with anything. And soon Prabhupāda said we should be Kṛṣṇa's dog. He was also speaking about how our pūjārīs should never be paid. The teacher and the pūjārī should never receive a salary. They must work in pure devotion. The kṣatriya also. He said that was the mistake in government today, that the kṣatriyas are being paid. He discussed so many things, one after another.

Nanda-kumāra: Śrīla Prabhupāda would tell us to go bathe in the ocean. "Go to the beach," he would say. So one day I asked him, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, whenever I go down to the beach, the sun is warm on my body, the water feels so good, the sand—it seems like such a comfortable material situation. How should I understand your reason for asking us to go to the beach? I know the spiritual master never gives the disciple anything that will cause him to become materially attached but always gives him whatever he needs to remember Kṛṣṇa. But when I go to the beach, it seems I just enjoy my senses. How can I relate that to Kṛṣṇa? How can I understand that this instruction is for my spiritual benefit?"

Prabhupāda said, "The sun is there—Kṛṣṇa is the light of the sun. The ocean is there—Kṛṣṇa is the taste of water. You are surrounded by Kṛṣṇa. How can you forget Kṛṣṇa? He is all around you."

Pāñcajanya: I was a new devotee, and I asked Prabhupāda, "What about swimming, Śrīla Prabhupāda? Is that not mātā?" Prabhupāda said, "Lord Caitanya used to go swimming all the time. He used to play ball. So you can go and swim. Just make sure you remember Kṛṣṇa."

Purī Mahārāja's āśrama was a simple single-story building of about eight rooms. When he offered Prabhupāda a room next to his own, Prabhupāda was pleased, accepting it as an expression of friendship. Prabhupāda relaxed with his Godbrothers, Purī Mahārāja and Ānanda Brahmācārī, speaking with them in Bengali. Purī Mahārāja said he appreciated Prabhupāda's work and his Western disciples.

Prabhupāda's disciples had already seen formal exchanges of obeisances between Prabhupāda and his Godbrothers, as when in Bombay they had seen Prabhupāda get off his vyāsāsana and offer daṇḍavats to his Godbrothers. But in Visakhapatnam they saw more intimate dealings. They saw for the first time Śrīla Prabhupāda living comfortably, at ease, in the same quarters as his Godbrothers. And they didn't feel themselves being treated condescendingly or superficially, or being regarded as oddities. Through Prabhupāda's guidance they began to learn more of the essential friendly and humble exchanges between Vaiṣṇavas.

Prabhupāda's Godbrother Ānanda was eager to cook and serve not only Śrīla Prabhupāda but all his disciples. Ānanda was elderly, and yet he took the position of always offering menial service. Although he spoke very little English, Prabhupāda's disciples could perceive the affection of Ānanda and Śrīla Prabhupāda for each other. Ānanda's communication with Prabhupāda's disciples was particularly through his cooking and serving of prasādam.

Each morning everyone would gather on the veranda outside Prabhupāda's quarters, the men sitting on one side, the ladies on the other. Down the center aisle Ānanda would walk briskly, distributing prasādam, while Prabhupāda sat at one end in a wooden chair, fingering his japa beads and observing the devotees take prasādam. Prabhupāda had supplied money to the āśrama, and Ānanda was regularly cooking sumptuous feasts: deep-fried chunks of potatoes in powdered spices, rice, yogurt, dāl, three different types of sabjīs, french fries, chutney, malpurā, rājkeḷi, sandeśa, kṣīra—and everything cooked to a nectarean standard of excellence.

Prabhupāda would sit at the head of the two rows of devotees and encourage them to take prasādam: "Give him more!" Prabhupāda would praise Ānanda's cooking, smiling with pleasure to see his disciples accept prasādam. The devotees would finish, having been induced to eat as much as they possibly could, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would say aloud the prema-dhvani. Then all the devotees would shout in response, "Jaya!"

After one such feast, Prabhupāda called the devotees into his room and remarked, "See how he is cooking. He cooks everything, he serves it, and then he doesn't eat until everyone is fully satisfied. This is Vaiṣṇava, how he should act. He is more satisfied to serve than to enjoy himself." The feasts continued twice a day, and in the evening many guests arrived to take prasādam, chant in the kīrtanas, and hear Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture.

One day Śrīla Prabhupāda took his disciples to see a famous temple of Lord Nṛsiṃha, Śrī Siṃhācalam, on top of a hill about five miles north of Visakhapatnam. Thousands of stone steps led

up the hill to the temple, which was situated in a natural amphitheater on the side of the hill. Prabhupāda said the temple, which was now run by followers of the Rāmānuja sect, was particularly important because Lord Caitanya had visited there on His tour of South India.

Śrīla Prabhupāda chose to approach the temple by car, riding up the winding road past orchards of mango, jackfruits, and cashew, and fields of pineapple. On arriving at the temple, Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples met one of the temple brāhmaṇas, who showed them around the grounds. The temple buildings were of black granite, and carved into the rock were the forms and pastimes of Viṣṇu, especially in His incarnation of Lord Nṛsiṃha. As Prabhupāda moved from place to place, building to building, he sometimes rode up steep stairs on a palanquin carried by four men.

When Prabhupāda came upon an immense banyan tree at the lower end of the temple grounds, he said that the tree must be thousands of years old. As he stood beneath the tree, his servant, Nandakumāra, handed him a small campaka flower. Extending his thumb and forefinger from his bead bag, Prabhupāda held the campaka flower and looked fondly at it. "This flower," he said, "is the color of Lord Caitanya. And this flower is the most loved all over India. This flower is beautiful to look at and beautiful to smell." He carried the small saffron-gold flower between his fingers throughout the rest of the morning.

When Prabhupāda and his group entered the inner sanctum, where the Deity of Lord Nṛsiṃha resided, their guide explained that the mūrti dated back to the time of Prahāda Mahārāja. An ancient king named Purūravā and his consort Urvaśī had once visited this hill, and at the request of Urvaśī, the mūrti, who appeared to her in a dream, had been excavated. The Lord had ordained that He should be worshiped in this place but that He would give darśana only one day a year, during the month of Vaiśākha. The rest of the year He would be entirely covered with ground sandalwood pulp mixed with camphor and other scents. Therefore, the Deity now appeared to be only a lump covered with a layer of sandalwood. Prabhupāda commented that the sandalwood was to keep the Deity "cool-headed."

Mādhavānanda: When Prabhupāda was at the Nṛsiṃha temple in Visakhapatnam, it was the same as when he was in Vṛndāvana. When he got out of the car, he was very grave. We went into the temple, and there was a chamber. Then we went down. The walls were four feet thick, and it seemed like hundreds of feet of tunnels before we got into the inner sanctum. There was the Deity with just a mound of sandalwood paste on Him. As soon as we entered, Prabhupāda said, "Begin chanting the Nṛsiṃha mantra." So we started singing tava kara-kamala-vare nakham adbhuta-śṛṅgam. And we circumambulated the Deity. Then we stood before the Deity, and Prabhupāda offered obeisances.

Gurukrpā: When we came into the Deity room, Prabhupāda had us sing the Nṛsiṃha prayers. He always manifested such devotion. That was what separated him from us—not only his learning or his knowledge, but his devotion. In these places we would see him become very silent, very grave, and when he would speak, such peace would fill us from within. When he would speak, you could feel it. He was constantly convincing us of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Not purposely, but he was just being himself. In these places it would come out.

When Prabhupāda stood with us before the Deity, we couldn't even see. There was just a mound of sandalwood. There was one brāhmaṇa with big earlobes, and he had a ring in his ear. We offered some money. But it was a very devotional time. Prabhupāda didn't say much, and the main reason was that these places are appreciated according to one's spiritual advancement. The details and facts and the history are not really that important. There is nothing really to say. Prabhupāda would just make sure we had the proper respect and didn't commit any offense.

Prabhupāda would lecture in the evening, speaking sometimes at schools and social clubs in Visakhapatnam. During the program at the Ramakrishna Hall, where more than a thousand people attended, Śrīla Prabhupāda's dancing induced the entire audience to dance. The devotees danced in a ring around Śrīla Prabhupāda, and the kīrtana continued for an hour.

At another program a bearded American anthropologist rode up on a motorcycle to attend Prabhupāda's lecture and kīrtana. Afterward, the anthropologist told Śrīla Prabhupāda that he had come to India to study the primitive tribes. Prabhupāda told him it was simply a waste of time. "Why do you want to study the primitive people?" he asked. "Why don't you study the exalted people?" And Prabhupāda narrated a story:

One time a poor man roasted a cob of corn and then began picking off the kernels one at a time and eating them. In this way it took him many hours to finish. He did this, Prabhupāda said, because he had nothing else to do, just to pass the time of day. In the same way, the study of anthropology was simply a waste of time. Prabhupāda asked, "Why don't you study some person or group of persons from whom you can learn something?"

During the day Prabhupāda would sit outside his room and enjoy the atmosphere. He wore no shirt, and his healthy body shone with a golden luster as he sat drinking freshly pressed sugarcane juice. "This is just how it is in Vaiṣṇava," he said. "There is always a very cool, pleasant breeze." He often walked about, chanting, talking about Kṛṣṇa, listening to the devotees' kīrtanas, and observing the activities of the temple.

Repeatedly Prabhupāda invited Purī Mahārāja to come and preach in the West. He requested him to at least come to Māyāpur for ISKCON's international gathering of devotees. Prabhupāda felt that Purī Mahārāja, on seeing all the Western disciples, might feel moved to join him and preach. Purī Mahārāja agreed to accompany Prabhupāda to Calcutta and Māyāpur, and the pleasant week in Visakhapatnam came to an end with Prabhupāda, his disciples, and Purī Mahārāja looking forward to traveling together to Calcutta.

Gurukṛpā: Although we arrived at the train station early, the train was already at the platform. It was very hot, and five or six of us were having kīrtana. Then Śyāmasundara climbed up a coconut tree and got this fantastic coconut. He opened it and gave it to Prabhupāda, who proceeded to drink a lot. Then Prabhupāda gave it to Śyāmasundara, and Śyāma sundara drank. Then Prabhupāda said, "Give it to the kīrtana members." Each man in the kīrtana group was so thirsty that he wasn't even thinking of leaving any for the next man but would just pass this coconut around. And the thing wouldn't empty. I tilted it up, and the coconut water was coming out, pouring on my shirt, and I was drinking and drinking. But still it wouldn't empty. We were amazed. Prabhupāda was smiling, and we were chanting. We all became cool and satisfied.

Śyāmasundara: Prabhupāda and I were in a first-class railway coach, a private compartment for two persons, clackity-clacking through the warm Indian night, somewhere between Visakhapatnam and Calcutta. Prabhupāda was talking and joking and playing tapes until around ten-thirty P.M., when he lay down to take rest. For a while I switched off the lights. At about midnight Prabhupāda sat upright and called my name. “Śyāmasundara, take dictation,” he said. Then followed a train of thoughts so lucid and coherent that I could only conclude that while we think Śrīla Prabhupāda is sleeping he is usually not sleeping but is thinking, reflecting on ways to serve Kṛṣṇa more and more.

SPL 39: I Will Build a Wonderful Temple for You

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

I Will Build

a Wonderful Temple for You

Prabhupāda had postponed the Māyāpur cornerstone-laying ceremony until Gaura-pūrṇimā (the appearance day of Lord Caitanya), February 29, 1972. He had requested a big festival, with a paṇḍāl and free feasting for guests. His disciples from all over the world would attend.

I want very much to hold this function this year with all of my students... It is a very important day and it will be a great service to Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thakur and to His son Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. So please arrange for this program.

In December, when the war had broken out between India and Pakistan over Bangladesh, near Māyāpur, the Indian government had forbidden foreigners to stay in the northern area of West Bengal. The devotees had vacated, returning a few weeks later when the war had ended. They had continued arranging for the festival, and a few days before Gaura-pūrṇimā Prabhupāda arrived to stay with them.

When Prabhupāda saw a banner on bamboo poles—“Welcome Śrīla Prabhupāda!”—he remarked, “I don't know if my Godbrothers will like this.” He had already heard that some of his Godbrothers objected to his taking the same title as their spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda. He had not actually taken the name, but his disciples had given him the name a few years ago in America. In May 1968 while in Boston, Prabhupāda had been dictating a letter and had mentioned to his secretary that Swamiji was a third-class title for the spiritual master. “Then why do we call you Swamiji?” his secretary had asked.

“The spiritual master,” Prabhupāda had replied, “is usually addressed by names like Gurudeva, Viṣṇupāda, or Prabhupāda.”

“May we call you Prabhupāda?” his secretary had asked.

Prabhupāda had replied, "Yes," and his disciples had switched from "Swamiji" to "Prabhupāda." One of the devotees had inquired further from Prabhupāda about the meaning of the word and had published a statement in Back to Godhead magazine.

Prabhupāda

The word Prabhupāda is a term of the utmost reverence in Vedic religious circles, and it signifies a great saint even among saints. The word actually has two meanings: first, one at whose feet (pada) there are many Prabhus (a term meaning "master," which the disciples of a Guru use in addressing each other). The second meaning is one who is always found at the Lotus Feet of Krishna (the Supreme Master).

In the line of disciplic succession through which Krishna Consciousness is conveyed to mankind, there have been a number of figures of such spiritual importance as to be called Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Rupa Goswami Prabhupāda executed the will of his Master, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and therefore he and his associate Goswamis are called Prabhupāda. Śrīla Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur executed the will of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thakur, and therefore he is also addressed as Prabhupāda. Our Spiritual Master, Om Vishnupad 108 Sri Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj has, in the same way, executed the will of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupāda in carrying the message of love of Krishna to the Western world, and therefore we American and European humble servants of His Divine Grace, from all the different centers of the Sankirtan Movement have followed in the footsteps of Śrīla Rupa Goswami Prabhupāda, and prefer to address His Grace our Spiritual Master as Prabhupāda, and he has kindly said "Yes."

Everyone concerned had been happy about the title Prabhupāda, and no one had foreseen the envy the name would uncover. How could Prabhupāda compete for the honor due his own spiritual master? He was fixed as the humble servant of his spiritual master.

The members of ISKCON saw no harm in calling their spiritual master Prabhupāda. And there could be no stopping them—he was their Prabhupāda. They had even printed A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda on their invitations for the Gaura-pūrṇimā festival. But Prabhupāda knew it would raise the eyebrows of certain of his more critical Godbrothers.

When inspecting the living accommodations for the devotees, Prabhupāda found spacious white canvas tents—one for the men and one for the women—with fluorescent lighting inside. A large paṇḍāl tent stood in the center of the other tents, and a small tent in the rear served as a kitchen. Immediately surrounding the small compound were rice fields. The ground, therefore, was slightly moist, and the wet fields bred large mosquitoes, which emerged at sunset. Conditions were primitive, but many of these devotees were the same disciples who had traveled with Prabhupāda for a year and a half in India, sometimes living in dirty dharmaśālās with bare rooms and sometimes living in cold tents in Allahabad. The devotees had not come to Māyāpur to be comfortable but to serve Prabhupāda. In future years, by the result of their efforts, many, many devotees would be able to gather comfortably in Māyāpur in the spacious buildings Prabhupāda was planning.

Well aware that Westerners were unaccustomed to the austerities of living in India, Prabhupāda wanted to provide facilities so his disciples could feel comfortable and be able to focus their stay in India on spiritual life, without distracting inconveniences. Therefore he was pushing them to help in various ways to establish a Māyāpur building with running water, electricity, and other conveniences.

Prabhupāda's dwelling was a simple thatched Bengali hut about twelve feet square, with a dirt floor. A thin partition divided the main room from the servants' quarters. In front was a small veranda, and in back a garden, where Prabhupāda could sit and take massage. Also in back were a hand pump for bathing and an outhouse. When the devotees apologized for offering Prabhupāda such a humble residence, he replied that he liked the natural simplicity. "Even if you build me the biggest palace," he said, "still I would prefer to live here."

While living so simply in Māyāpur, Prabhupāda spoke of his vision of a grand project yet to come. Although the Deities of Rādhā-Mādhava—whom he had worshiped at the 1971 Ardha-kumbhamelā in Allahabad—were installed in a tent, he spoke of a marble palace. He also spoke of first-class accommodations for guests and devotees, although as yet he had little to offer. Living simply and happily in his thatched hut, he gathered his disciples together and told them of his plans. At his request, devotees had built a small model of the proposed first major building, and there were also drawings of the proposed Temple of Human Understanding. He wanted to build a Māyāpur city, he said, with quarters for each of the four social classes of the varṇāśrama institution.

Tatpara: When Prabhupāda would go to the Western countries, he would be interviewed by many great persons, but when he came to Māyāpur, he was talking so friendly, sometimes taking juice or giving instructions, and he lived simple, like a villager. The Western devotees think sometimes of Prabhupāda in one līlā only, like a great king. But when he comes to India, he is like another person. He was laughing and talking like a friend.

Bhavananda: In his straw house Prabhupāda sat on a bamboo platform. There was a bed and some mats on the floor. That was all. He was happier there than anywhere. We put a fan in there too, and Prabhupāda liked it. He liked it because it was so simple. There was an outhouse, but he didn't mind it at all. He was relishing everything. At that time he made Jayapataka and me codirectors of Māyāpur. He made four signers on the checking account for the building construction. In India, just to open up an account is very difficult. We were seeing that part of Prabhupāda, where he was very strict because he knows the difficulties you can run into. If you don't fill out the proper forms, the bank can even keep your money. Or you may want to close your account and they won't let you. Our mood was splayed out—we were babies. So Prabhupāda was training us in keeping accounts and management.

Jananivāsa: The first time Prabhupāda came to see the Deities, he said, "Who is dressing the Deities?" Someone said, "Jananivāsa." The Deities were just standing on a tile platform with no decoration. They were just standing there, but Prabhupāda looked on Them so lovingly. He used to come and take darśana every day. One time he came to the Deity room and I wasn't there. There were some Indian people taking darśana, and I had gone to get them a Back to Godhead magazine from a room about ten feet away. When I came back, Prabhupāda was there. He was also taking darśana, but he said, "You should always be standing here. People are coming, but no one is here."

I said, “Śrīla Prabhupāda, I just went to get a Back to Godhead. It is only ten feet away.” But he looked at me as if to say, “You are defending yourself again, making excuses.” Then he told Bhavānanda, “This boy, Jananivāsa, should have some help. He can't do everything. He is an ordinary person.”

The five-day Gaura-pūrṇimā festival featured twenty-four-hour kīr tana, with groups of devotees chanting in two-hour shifts. Each morning the main body of devotees would form a kīrtana procession and go out visiting Navadvīpa's holy sights: the nīm tree under which Lord Caitanya was born, the house of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, where Lord Caitanya and His associates had performed nocturnal kīrtana, the spot where the Kazi had tried to stop Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana, the residence of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. (Often Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had stood in front of this house, Prabhupāda told the devotees, and looked out across the Jalāngī toward where Śrīla Prabhupāda now had his land.)

Throughout the day and especially in the evenings, the devotees would gather on the stage of the orange-striped paṇḍāl, while Rādhā-Mādhava stood at stage center within a traditional Bengali simhāsana of carved banana stalks covered with colored foil and flower garlands. Prabhupāda would have his disciples do most of the public speaking, with Acyutānanda Swami, lecturing in Bengali, as the main speaker.

Hundreds of people came and went in a steady stream, and the devotees distributed Bengali, English, and Hindi Back to Godhead magazines. In the evenings they would present a slide show or a film. Prabhupāda was especially pleased to watch the prasādam distribution from his window, hundreds of villagers squatting in long rows, eating kicharī from round leaf plates. “Continue this forever,” Prabhupāda told his disciples. “Always distribute prasādam.”

Even without a building, Prabhupāda's preaching in Māyāpur was significant. While other nearby maṭhas were also observing Gaura-pūrṇimā—mostly by hosting Calcutta widows who paid a fee to live a few days in a temple and visit the holy places of Navadvīpa—Prabhupāda's paṇḍāl program was the most vigorous celebration and drew the most visitors. The birthplace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Prabhupāda said, had no meaning without preaching. Except for this time of the year, very few people visited Māyāpur.

“Which is more important,” Prabhupāda asked, “Lord Caitanya's birthplace or His activities? It is His activities, His karma. His activities are more important than His janma, or place of birth.” The activities of Lord Caitanya were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and distributing love of God to all people, and this should be the activity of devotees in Māyāpur.

On Gaura-pūrṇimā day, ten of Prabhupāda's sannyāsī Godbrothers visited to participate along with Prabhupāda's disciples and hundreds of visitors in the dedication and cornerstone-laying ceremony. Prabhupāda was gracious and friendly toward his Godbrothers, and he was gratified that they could all sit together to dedicate the world headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Sitting on a cushion next to the sacrificial arena, chanting on japa beads, Prabhupāda initiated six Bengali devotees and awarded the sannyāsa order to a young American disciple. Then Prabhupāda's Godbrothers spoke, each expressing appreciation of Prabhupāda's work in the West.

Finally they all gathered around the pit, five feet square and fifteen feet deep. Certain articles had been collected to be placed inside the pit in accordance with the scriptures: five kinds of flowers, five kinds of grains, five kinds of leaves, five kinds of metal, five kinds of nectar, five kinds of colors, five kinds of fruits, and five kinds of jewels. Prabhupāda's Godbrother Purī Mahārāja descended a ladder into the pit to put coconuts and banana leaves in a pot and to place this, along with flowers, onto the altar of bricks.

Next Prabhupāda entered the pit, carrying a box with a gold, ruby-eyed mūrti of Ānanta Śeṣa. Earlier that morning in his hut Prabhupāda had confidentially shown a few disciples the mūrti. "This is Lord Ānanta," he had said, "the serpent bed on which Lord Viṣṇu rests. He will hold the temple on His head." Prabhupāda now placed Ānanta Śeṣa on the altar of bricks and climbed back up the ladder. Then on Prabhupāda's blissful invitation, everyone began to toss in offerings of flowers and money, followed by handfuls of earth.

Although Prabhupāda's Godbrothers had praised his work on Gaura-pūrṇimā day, several of them returned a few days later to complain about his use of the title Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda asked his disciples to leave the room. When they were alone, one of the sannyāsī Godbrothers began challenging Prabhupāda in Bengali: "Why are you using Prabhupāda? You have no right. This is our Prabhupāda's title. You cannot take it."

"I did not take it," Prabhupāda replied. "They are calling me Prabhupāda. What can I do?" Although the sannyāsī Godbrother then began to criticize Prabhupāda for not joining their preaching and for awarding the sacred thread and sannyāsa order to Westerners, mainly the Godbrothers wanted an explanation for his use of the title Prabhupāda.

"Brahmānanda Mahārāja!" Prabhupāda called. "Bring me a copy of my letterhead." When Brahmānanda Swami returned with the stationery, Prabhupāda showed it to his Godbrothers. The letterhead read, "Tridandi Goswami A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." No "Prabhupāda." This proved that he himself did not use the title. This simple demonstration pacified his Godbrothers, and he then invited them to take prasādam with him, while his disciples served.

Later in his hut Prabhupāda talked with his disciples about envy. A devotee could judge his own advancement by how free he was from envy, he said. In the spiritual world envy was conspicuous by its absence. Although all the liberated associates of Kṛṣṇa were trying their best to serve Kṛṣṇa—in a kind of competition—everyone was pleased with one another. If Rādhārāṇī or a favorite gopī pleased Kṛṣṇa, the other gopīs did not think ill of her but thought, "Oh, how nicely she has served Kṛṣṇa. Let me try to offer some nice service to Kṛṣṇa so He will be even more pleased!" To be envious was materialistic.

Prabhupāda wished his Godbrothers had taken a different point of view. He wished they had not minded his being called Prabhupāda by his disciples. He was also sorry that some of his Godbrothers couldn't sincerely praise his work. If Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was working

successfully through him, why should they be disturbed? Why not accept his work and be happy that the mission of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu was being spread effectively? They should see it as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's work, the work of their own spiritual master. It was also their work, their responsibility, and they should recognize that through Bhaktivedānta Swami Mahārāja it was being wonderfully done. At the ceremony they had praised his work. So if they didn't mind praising him, then why not admit that for hundreds of Westerners whom he had saved from hell, he was Prabhupāda, that singular pure devotee whom they always thought of as seated at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

In terms of authorized books produced and distributed, numbers of devotees initiated and engaged in devotional service, and numbers of temples opened, no one could compare. Of course, in one sense all of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers were equally praiseworthy, as long as they followed the basic instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, and avoided sinful life. But if analysis or criticism was to be made with such scrutiny, then let the preaching records be scrutinized. Who, above all, was extending the mercy of Lord Nityānanda and making such tremendous gains on behalf of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī—gains that had previously seemed impossible? According to Caitanya-caritāmṛta, if a preacher could spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, then he must be accepted as empowered by God.

Prabhupāda was certainly empowered, yet he conducted himself very humbly, with no assistance from others. He had repeatedly invited his Godbrothers to join him in the West and take their places beside him as preachers in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Why had they not come forward to assist him in their spiritual master's mission, instead of complaining about him, the one Godbrother who was carrying out Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's mission?

It was not the place of Prabhupāda's disciples to criticize, however, and he had sternly warned them that they had no position to do so. They should treat his Godbrothers as disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and therefore as on the level of their own spiritual master. Nevertheless, Prabhupāda's disciples became sorry to see this lack of respect for their spiritual master. They could be humble and not protest, but how could they be affectionate toward persons who criticized their spiritual master and his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement?

After the five-day festival, Prabhupāda left Māyāpur for Vṛndāvana, where he planned to hold another ground-breaking ceremony. The Māyāpur land was still completely undeveloped, and Prabhupāda urged his disciples in India to continue collecting the necessary funds.

We are making a very gorgeous plan at Māyāpur, and if you all together can give shape to this plan it will be unique in the whole world. It will be a world center for teaching spiritual life. Students from all over the world will come and we shall revolutionize the atheistic and communistic tendencies of rascal philosophers. So we must be responsible for this great task. Not for a single moment shall we be without ISKCON thoughts. That is my request to you all.

* * *

February 1972

During Prabhupāda's absence from Vṛndāvana the devotees had been unable to persuade Mr. S. to grant legal permission for ISKCON to use the land. Prabhupāda had insistently directed one of his Indian-born disciples, Kṣīrodakaśāyī, to acquire from Mr. S. an actual deed. Kṣīrodakaśāyī had pleaded with Mr. S., and seeing Mr. S.'s indecision, he had spoken with Mrs. S. and then with the two of them together.

Mr. and Mrs. S. had agreed that since they could not decide, they would put the matter before Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī Herself. Mrs. S. had asked Kṣīrodakaśāyī to take two slips of paper and to write yes on one and no on the other. These she had folded and placed before the family Deity of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. She had then asked Kṣīrodakaśāyī to pick one of the papers. Kṣīrodakaśāyī had done so, and in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. S. and Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, he had opened the piece of paper on which was written the word yes.

When Prabhupāda had heard the news, he had been joyous.

I am especially pleased upon you that you have secured the S. land for Kṛṣṇa. Now let us cooperate to build up a wonderful center there in Vṛndavana.

In March 1972 Prabhupāda returned to Vṛndāvana to sign the deed with Mr. S. and to perform the ground-breaking ceremony. With permission from the gosvāmīs at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, he arranged for quarters for his disciples so they would have a place to reside while the temple at Ramaṇa-reti was under construction.

Yamunā: It just so happened that on the morning that the gosvāmīs were to sign an agreement with Prabhupāda for use of the rooms at Rādhā-Dāmodara, the electricity went out. Prabhupāda's secretary had only an electric typewriter, so I reminded Prabhupāda that I was trained in writing calligraphy. I had my writing pens with me, so immediately Prabhupāda drafted the writing that he wanted, and I took it into another room, sat down, and hand-lettered a contract with gold embossing on all the capitals. Within fifteen minutes we presented it to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Before the gosvāmīs, Prabhupāda held up the document with pleasure and said, "Just see, my disciples are expert in everything." Now the devotees would be allowed to reside above his rooms at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, and they would also have access to his rooms for cleaning. Prabhupāda felt it was a grand occasion that there was something in writing for the preservation of his rooms in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple.

To close the transaction for the land in Ramaṇa-reti, Prabhupāda and Mr. S. met at the Magistrate's Court in Mathurā. In the presence of lawyers they completed the formalities. Prabhupāda saw it as Kṛṣṇa's grace that he had acquired a good plot of land in Vṛndāvana, and writing to his G.B.C. secretaries in America, he asked them to send as many men as possible to help in the new project. He described his intentions "for raising up a very excellent center, to revive the spiritual life for Vṛndavana on behalf of Rupa and Jiva Goswamis."

Prabhupāda told Kṣīrodakaśāyī, "I want on this occasion huge prasādam should be prepared, and every man in Vṛndāvana should be invited and take prasādam." Two days later, with a hundred people attending, Prabhupāda held the cornerstone-laying ceremony at Ramaṇa-reti. Again he descended into the ceremonial pit and placed the Deity of Ānanta, on whose head the temple would rest.

But late that night the land was attacked. An elderly Indian widow, with local fame as a sādhu, became angry that Mr. S. had not given her the land, which she had several times requested. During the night she sent guṇḍās to dismantle the brick foundation of the ceremonial cornerstone and to desecrate the pit, which had just that day been filled with flowers and religious objects. The guṇḍās dug open the hole, threw garbage into it, and stole the "Posted" sign announcing the land's new ownership.

Prabhupāda was in his room at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple when he heard what had happened. He became angry and told his disciples to show the deed to the police. That night several policemen guarded the land, and when the hired guṇḍās came again, the police accosted them and warned that if they caused any more trouble they would be arrested. And that was the end of that.

Prabhupāda had several times said that by becoming a devotee, one gains many enemies. The incident also served to confirm Prabhupāda's conviction that ISKCON's taking possession of the land should be followed as quickly as possible by construction of a temple. They should at least encircle the land with a fence, build small huts, and live on the land while preparing for temple construction.

Tejās: "This will be the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple," Prabhupāda said. We didn't really know what was going on. We all thought it was so far away. It was really the boondocks, Ramaṇa-reti. Nobody was out there. It was such an isolated place, and there were lots of dacoits living out there. We thought, "If we're going to have a temple out here, no one will ever come." But Prabhupāda said, "Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, everyone will come."

Prabhupāda's secretary, Śyāmasundara, wrote to a Godbrother about the newly acquired Vṛndāvana property.

Earlier in the day, before breakfast, Prabhupāda sewed up the 4,800 sq. yd. gift plot in Raman Reti where Krishna used to sport with Friends in the forest, about 10 minutes walk from Radha-Damodara. Prabhupāda surveyed the land (with the rope from his mosquito-net), bargained-for, drew plans for, drew up the deed for, went to Mathura magistrate's court for and signed, sealed, and delivered in an instant. Prabhupāda has asked me to request you that AT LEAST FIFTY (50) MEN FROM THE U.S. MUST COME TO INDIA IMMEDIATELY!!! At last we have got a solid programme in India: Huge projects at Mayapur, Vrindaban and Bombay. All the lands are acquired, arrangements made, and everything by Prabhupāda. But only a few of us men are here to struggle with an immense task—the biggest by far within the Society, of developing these three places, and believe me these three projects are more dear to Prabhupāda than any yet contemplated.

In the month while Prabhupāda was away from Bombay (he had left on February 10) the payment of fifty thousand rupees was duly made. Slowly at first, a few devotees moved to the Juhu land, living in a tent. At night the rats and mosquitoes would disturb the devotees' sleep. While attempting to clear the overgrown weeds, they came upon empty liquor bottles and overflowing sewage. Without Prabhupāda present, their resolution grew weak.

But then Brahmānanda Swami returned from Calcutta, where he had been with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Brahmānanda Swami was inspired, and he gave the Bombay devotees new impetus. They would have to clear the land and raise a paṇḍāl right away. Brahmānanda Swami had never put on a paṇḍāl program before, but he hired a contractor to build several chātāi (palm frond) houses for the devotees and a festival tent. Even before the construction could begin, however, the devotees would have to thoroughly clear the land.

Mr. Sethi, a neighbor and life member, hired a work crew to cut down the weeds and vegetation, and several life members and friends in Bombay also came forward to assist. Mr. N. offered to help by sending one of his assistants, Mr. Matar, to organize the hired laborers in clearing the fields. The devotees also worked in preparation for Prabhupāda's return.

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsavihārī arrived at Hare Krishna Land in a taxi, riding across the laps of several devotees. They had moved before, and this time Their residence was a tent. They had first come to be with the devotees of Bombay during the paṇḍāl program at Cross Maidan in downtown Bombay. On that occasion there had been a procession to Chowpatti Beach, and when the devotees had arrived, Rādhā-Rāsavihārī, beautifully dressed and decorated and installed in an ornate palanquin, had been awaiting them. Kṛṣṇa was white marble and held a silver flute; Rādhārāṇī's right hand, palm forward, extended a benediction. They were beautiful.

After Their first appearance at Chowpatti, Rādhā-Rāsavihārī had moved to the Akash Ganga Building, where gradually the devotees had established a decent standard of Deity worship. When Prabhupāda had left orders that Rādhā-Rāsavihārī should move to Juhu as soon as the down payment was made, some of the devotees had questioned him: Why should the Deity move before the facilities were proper? Shouldn't they wait until the temple was built?

"Once the Deity is installed on a piece of property," Prabhupāda had replied, "no one will remove Them."

More than anyone else, Prabhupāda was aware of the proper worship to be offered to Rādhā-Rāsavihārī, but his emphasis now was on securing the land. How else, he reasoned, could he eventually give Rādhā-Rāsavihārī a royal throne and temple unless They Themselves first established Their right of proprietorship by taking up residence at Hare Kṛṣṇa Land? The arrival of Rādhā-Rāsavihārī at Juhu also meant increased difficulties for the devotees, who now had to struggle to maintain the morning pūjā and cook six daily offerings in the meager kitchen. Even Rādhā-Rāsavihārī's tent was insubstantial and swayed in the wind.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, saw the move as a necessary, transcendental tactic. He felt certain that everyone involved—himself, the owners of the land, the Bombay municipality—would accept that the land belonged to Kṛṣṇa, since Kṛṣṇa was already residing there. And because he was asking

Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself to accept these inconveniences, he prayed to the Deity, "My dear Sir, please remain here, and I shall build a beautiful temple for You."

By the time Prabhupāda returned to Bombay, Rādhā-Rāsavihārī were installed on the stage of the festival paṇḍāl. Attendance at the festival was not as great as it would have been in downtown Bombay—no more than five hundred people came a night—but Prabhupāda was satisfied. This festival was on their own property, and this was only the beginning.

Every evening Prabhupāda lectured at the paṇḍāl and attended the kīrtana and āratī before Rādhā-Rāsavihārī. Pañcadraviḍa Swami had collected donations of five tons of dāl, rice, and flour, and the devotees were regularly cooking enough kicharī to serve 125 people free prasādam daily. In the evening Prabhupāda himself would give out hālavā from the Deities' plate, and the crowd, including well-to-do businessmen and their wives, would press forward to receive the prasādam. Prabhupāda liked the festival so much that he told the devotees to arrange to keep the tent for a perpetual festival.

Prabhupāda lived on the land in a tent, just like the other devotees, until a Mr. Acharya, one of the more favorable tenants living in the back of the property, invited him to stay at his home.

Within a few days of his arrival at Juhu, Prabhupāda was ready to hold the ground-breaking and cornerstone-laying ceremony—another tactic for securing possession of the land. But it was more than a tactic, as he wanted a temple constructed as soon as possible. Rādhā-Rāsavihārī should not remain standing in a tent but should be protected by a silver and teakwood simhāsana on a marble altar. They should be surrounded by deities of the two gopīs Lalitā and Viśākhā, and Their temple should have marble domes more than a hundred feet high. Thousands should come daily for darśana and prasādam.

One morning, in the midst of the festival activities, the devotees of Hare Krishna Land joined Prabhupāda in a simple cornerstone-laying ceremony. They had dug a deep ceremonial pit and surrounded it with bricks. Prabhupāda descended and placed the Deity of Śeṣa. Then, sitting on a simple platform, Prabhupāda accompanied the kīrtana by playing a brass gong, while one by one the devotees came before him and threw dirt into the pit, filling it, while smoke rose from the sacrificial fire.

Prabhupāda was outraged that Brahmānanda Swami had agreed to pay the contractors forty thousand rupees for the paṇḍāl construction. It was the same old thing—the foolish Western disciples getting cheated. Prabhupāda refused to pay; four thousand rupees should be more than enough. When the contractors came to see him, he told them that he had little money and that they would have to be satisfied with four thousand rupees. They protested, but Prabhupāda became angry and insisted, "Accept it. You are making five hundred percent profit!"

"As soon as they see us," Prabhupāda said later, "they say, 'These Americans, they have got money!' Our work is going on in India, but as soon as money is being spent, fifty percent is being spoiled because you Americans are inexperienced. What can be done? The Indians want your money, and they cheat like anything."

During the paṇḍāl festival the tenement neighbors had become disturbed by kīrtanas over the loudspeaker. They were already disturbed that their landlord, Mr. N., was slow to repair the buildings and would sometimes let them go a full week without water before fixing the plumbing. Being suddenly forced to live with more than twenty American devotees only exacerbated their dissatisfaction. Some of the neighbors were converted Christians and unsympathetic to Vaiṣṇavism; they even feared their children might again be converted to Hinduism. Some tenants claimed the devotees were infringing on their privacy, some criticized the devotees for arguing among themselves, and others criticized that the unmarried men and women were living in close proximity—even though in separate quarters.

A few of the neighbors, however, could see that the Western Vaiṣṇavas were struggling to sincerely worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. None of the tenants criticized Prabhupāda, however, so when he was present, he was able to pacify them and resolve any disagreements. But Prabhupāda knew that after he left, the situation could easily become volatile.

Prabhupāda was planning an extensive world tour, traveling eastward to Australia, Japan, Hawaii, the U.S., and perhaps Mexico and Europe. It might be as long as half a year before he would return to India, and he wanted things to progress smoothly in Bombay without him.

A few days before Prabhupāda's departure, Madhudviṣa Swami complained, "I'm not feeling very enthusiastic here. I think I need a change." Prabhupāda asked him where he wanted to go, and Madhudviṣa replied that he was thinking of Australia. Prabhupāda said, "Yes, I am going there. You also come." Brahmānanda Swami told Prabhupāda that the preaching was deteriorating in Nairobi in his absence, and Prabhupāda agreed that he should return to his duties there.

Again, Prabhupāda had to choose a new Bombay manager, and this time he chose Girirāja, a young brahmachārī and leading preacher in making ISKCON life members. Prabhupāda reasoned that since the essence of management was to collect donations and make life members, and since Girirāja was expert at that, then even though he was young and otherwise inexperienced, he had the most important qualifications. Prabhupāda had already found Girirāja to be simple and submissively dedicated to helping him develop Hare Krishna Land.

Girirāja: Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "You will do, Girirāja?" So I said, "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda, whatever you say." I wasn't actually very happy about it, but I understood that one should be surrendered to the spiritual master, and whatever he said, one should do. So I accepted. Prabhupāda said that good management meant that whatever needs doing, you do it—that's all. Later I went in to see Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he was sitting behind his desk. He said, "Now the full responsibility is on you." I winced when he said that, because I wasn't used to taking responsibility.

During Prabhupāda's stay in Bombay, Hans Kielman, a young architect from Holland, had come to hear the lectures and had become interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda convinced Hans to become a devotee and to help build the Hare Kṛṣṇa city in Bombay. Under Prabhupāda's direction, Hans at once began to make architectural drawings for the buildings.

Hans: Prabhupāda said, "Now you listen carefully. Lord Kṛṣṇa has sent you here. You must design these temples for Him. You must do these very sincerely and not be afraid." I was completely

surrendered. That moment was really ecstasy for me. He had a pile of photographs on his desk, and he gave them to me and said, "Look at this." I looked at the pictures, and they were photographs of the new Govindajī temple in Vṛndāvana. He said, "I want you to make a design like this." So I asked him, "How big, Śrīla Prabhupāda?" He gave me a piece of typing paper and said I should draw on this paper. Then he gave me the photographs and a pencil and a ruler. He took me to the next room and told me to sit down at the table. Pradyumna was there with all his Sanskrit books, Śyāmasundara was there typing the letters, and suddenly I was in between, making the drawings.

Prabhupāda said Girirāja and the others would have to collect sixty-four lakhs of rupees for the construction. The devotees had no idea how they would raise even a fraction of that amount, but Prabhupāda gave them some ideas. He talked to them about enlisting the support of influential men by using the bheṇṭ-nāma system, whereby a person purchases the use of a guest room for life. And there were other ways.

But the immediate step was to get the land. They had possession of the land, but before building they should have the deed. Since Mr. N. was already overdue in delivering the deed, Prabhupāda told Girirāja to press him to comply with the written agreement and deliver the deed at once.

In Prabhupāda's last lecture in Bombay, he spoke about the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana and the bittersweet ecstasy of their hankering to be with Kṛṣṇa. Some of Prabhupāda's disciples took it that Prabhupāda was speaking about this because he was himself going to be leaving for a long time.

At the airport the next day there was a joyful farewell, as Prabhupāda waited for his flight to Australia. Sitting in the VIP lounge surrounded by devotees, Prabhupāda watched Madhudviṣa Swami lead an ecstatic kīrtana. "If you go on having kīrtanas like this," Prabhupāda told the devotees, "our Bombay project will be successful." When Prabhupāda saw Mrs. N. had come, he exclaimed, "Oh, Mrs. N., you are also here! You are becoming one of us."

* * *

Prabhupāda had the extraordinary ability to bring a spiritual vision into physical reality, to change a part of the material world into spiritual energy so that even a common man could perceive the spiritual reality. This was Prabhupāda's constant effort. Often a transcendentalist hesitates to deal with the material world, fearing he may become spiritually weakened. The Vedic injunctions, therefore, warn the transcendentalist to avoid associating with money and materialistic persons. But Prabhupāda, following the principles taught by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, saw that everything material had the potential of being used in the service of Kṛṣṇa and thus of regaining its spiritual nature. Following this principle, an expert devotee, although apparently acting within the material sphere, could remain always in touch with the spiritual energy. For such a devotee, nothing was material.

In the Vedic scriptures the great devotee Nārada Muni, because of his ability to convert materialistic men into devotees, is referred to as cintāmaṇi, touchstone. Just as cintāmaṇi is said to convert iron into gold, so Nārada could transform a beastlike hunter into a pure Vaiṣṇava. And as Nārada is glorified in the Vedas for accomplishing such feats in bygone ages, so Śrīla Prabhupāda is a similarly potent touchstone in the present age. Again and again he showed by his straightforward application of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that he could change a materialist into a completely renounced,

active devotee of the Lord. And now, after recruiting a number of devotees from *māyā*'s camp, he wanted to engage them in transforming as much as possible of the material world into living spirit. By his transcendental, visionary words, he was attempting to convert stone and human energy into glorious, spiritual temples.

While ambitious materialists sometimes criticize transcendentalists as unproductive, Prabhupāda, because of his constant activity, could never be so accused. Rather, people would criticize him as being a capitalist in the dress of a *sannyāsī*. But such criticism never deterred Prabhupāda; he was carrying out the desires of the previous *ācāryas*. He had written this conclusion in his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* even before coming to America in 1965.

Therefore, all the sages and devotees of the Lord have recommended that the subject matter of art, science, philosophy, physics, chemistry, psychology and all other branches of knowledge should be wholly and solely applied in the service of the Lord.

Prabhupāda wanted to convert significant portions of the material world into the spiritual world. In attempting to construct a spiritual city in Juhu, he realized he was launching a major attack against *māyā*. Within a few months so many complications and headaches had already disturbed his plans, and more would come; the battle was just beginning.

Sometimes Prabhupāda's disciples found the work to be draining and stressful; they would become bewildered. They had come to spiritual life for bliss, not for anxiety. Prabhupāda's presence and his constant encouragement helped them remain steadfast. He knew that once they tasted the nectar of selfless dedication to Kṛṣṇa, they would never accept anything lesser. He would encourage them, reminding them of the words of spiritual predecessors like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who had said, "Difficulties undertaken in the course of Your devotional service I will consider the greatest happiness."

SPL 40: Around the World but Absorbed in Bombay

CHAPTER FORTY

Around the World

but Absorbed in Bombay

Prabhupāda traveled with three disciples: Śyāmasundara as his secretary, Pradyumna as his servant and Sanskrit editor, and Nanda-kumāra as his cook. The first stop was Singapore, where, without explanation, immigration authorities refused Prabhupāda entry into the country. Sympathetic Indians in Singapore had arranged for Prabhupāda to lecture and had even mailed hundreds of invitations, but Śrīla Prabhupāda, disappointed and feeling ill, had to continue the twelve-hour flight to Sydney.

April 1, 1972

Prabhupāda planned to stay a few days in Sydney before going on to Melbourne. Although the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was young in Australia, Prabhupāda saw positive signs: devotees to initiate, TV and radio appearances, and an interested crowd at his morning lectures in the temple.

This was only his second visit to Australia. On his first visit, almost a year ago, he had installed the Deities Rādhā-Gopīnātha and had prayed to Them, “Now I am leaving You in the hands of the mlecchas. I cannot take the responsibility. You please guide these boys and girls and give them the intelligence to worship You very nicely.” Now, on returning and seeing the Deities beautifully dressed and well cared for, he felt happy. After five busy days of preaching he flew on to Melbourne.

Upananda: In Melbourne Prabhupāda spoke at the Town Hall, and all the Melbourne hippies came. There was a man there called the Wizard. He used to be a professor at the university, but he resigned his post so he could carry out his shenanigans. He was very intellectual. He was dressed in a black cape and leotard, and he got up as soon as Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for questions. He had a group of his own followers. First he spoke very respectfully. “Excuse me, Your Divine Grace. I've been listening to your lecture, but I have one thing I would like to say in this regard. I believe that I am God. I am the center of the universe. And I will prove sometime next year that I am the center of the universe.”

Prabhupāda said, “That's all right. Everybody is thinking like that. What makes you different?” Actually, the Wizard's whole game was that he wanted to be different—his dress, everything. So Prabhupāda exposed this, exposed him as just another materialistic fool. Everybody started laughing and clapping.

Auckland

April 14, 1972

The devotees had just opened a temple in New Zealand a few weeks before Prabhupāda's arrival. Prabhupāda stayed a couple of days and installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities.

Bhūrijana: Prabhupāda installed large marble Deities, but there was only one girl to take care of Them. Prabhupāda was insisting that the Deities should be installed anyway and that They should be taken care of properly. He demanded that They should have many sets of clothes immediately. So some devotees built a temporary wooden altar and put up a curtain for the Deities. The curtains fell down. Everything was going wrong. It was confusing, and everyone was upset.

So Śrīla Prabhupāda just took over. He said, “Put this here. Put that back up there. Do this. Do that.” He completely took command of the whole situation. The devotees put the curtains back, and Prabhupāda said, “Get rid of this vyāsāsana.” And they took the vyāsāsana out, because it was so big and the room was so small that there was no room for the people. Prabhupāda just put a mat on the floor and sat down on that.

Prabhupāda visited for one night in Hong Kong, where he lectured at a program arranged by Bhūrijana and his wife, Jagattārīnī.

Bhūrijana: We had taught the Indian children to sing the prayers to the spiritual master. So we had them sing for Prabhupāda. He looked at me, and he was really pleased. Then he said, "Your wife said there are no interested people, but you have so many students here." I said, "You have so many students, Prabhupāda."

At the end of the lecture Prabhupāda asked if there were any questions, and a little Indian boy raised his hand and asked, "Who started the forest fire?" The boy was thinking of a forest fire mentioned in the Kṛṣṇa book in Kṛṣṇa's pastime, but all he said was, "Who started the forest fire?" But Prabhupāda took the question in a different way—that this material world is like a blazing forest fire, just like the prayers to the spiritual master had described. So Prabhupāda said, "No one started the forest fire. It starts automatically—just like in the forest, by the rubbing of two bamboos a fire may start. But by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa we can get out of this forest fire of material life."

In Japan the devotees lived in an old farmhouse in the hill country outside Tokyo. Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed in a nearby hotel, installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in the temple, and awarded sannyāsa to ISKCON Tokyo's leader, Sudāmā.

Prabhupāda said he knew "the pulse of his disciples." Thus he had recently sensed a tendency in his leading managers to be too absorbed in management and not enough in preaching. He had been telling his secretary that G.B.C. men should not simply sit behind their desks and try to centralize power but should become detached, take sannyāsa, and travel and preach. With this in mind he had awarded the sannyāsa order to two of his G.B.C. secretaries, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā. Now he advised that they not give up their managerial burden but follow his example of preaching and managing their G.B.C. zones in a renounced spirit.

Śyāmasundara: Prabhupāda's hotel room had rice paper walls and was very cold. It was like coming back into the northern climate, but without central heating. One day I came to Prabhupāda's room for maṅgala-ārati and I had a blanket wrapped around me. I said, "Are you cold, Prabhupāda?" I could see he didn't like the cold, but he wasn't going to let that stop him from serving Kṛṣṇa.

Nanda-kumāra: At the Sunday feast there were about thirty Japanese people, mostly young, and every single one brought Prabhupāda a flower, put it at his feet, and paid full daṇḍavats. They were so respectful. Prabhupāda said that it was a good sign that "these boys and girls are able to honor a saintly person."

Bhūrijana: We had arranged a program in Kobe. Many Indians and Sindhis lived there. It was a long journey out of Tokyo. They put Prabhupāda on the third floor of the house, and there was no elevator. Prabhupāda just put his chin out and walked right up, even though it was a tremendous effort for him.

The engagement was arranged in such a poor way that on the same speaking program with Prabhupāda was a Māyāvādī sannyāsī. Prabhupāda wanted to speak first, so he spoke in English. There were quite a few Indians there—about a hundred. Prabhupāda explained very clearly and strongly that Kṛṣṇa is God.

Then the other sannyāsī began speaking in Hindi. Prabhupāda was just sitting there with his eyes closed, chanting japa. Suddenly he looked at us and said, "Start kīrtana immediately." So we got up in the middle of the sannyāsī's speaking and started kīrtana. Prabhupāda left quickly after the kīrtana.

When we got back to the room with Prabhupāda, he explained what had happened. He said, "First he was preaching nicely. And then he started explaining pañcopāsana, about the five different features of the Absolute. And then when he said that the Supreme is ultimately impersonal, I could not tolerate it." Prabhupāda said, "I am like a lion when I am out and a lamb when I am home."

Prabhupāda had business in Tokyo with his printer, Dai Nippon. He was greatly pleased with the faith Dai Nippon Printing Company placed in him, giving him hundreds of thousands of dollars credit just on his word. One of the Dai Nippon executives even approached him submissively, inquiring about whether his son who had died a year and a half ago had gone to the Buddha.

A young Japanese executive, who translated the older man's questions and Prabhupāda's answers, explained to Prabhupāda, "Since then he has been very religious."

"He was the eldest son?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Twenty years. Youngest son."

The two executives spoke briefly.

"He is asking how he can be relieved from such sadness when his son has died."

"Oh, yes," Prabhupāda said. "The point is that the success of everything depends on how Kṛṣṇa is satisfied. That I have explained." He related the example of Sāṅdīpani Muni, the spiritual master of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Sāṅdīpani Muni's son had died, and he requested his two students, "My dear boys, I lost my child very young. If You kindly bring him, then I will be very much pleased." So Kṛṣṇa went to the planet of Yamarāja and brought his son back.

"So you try to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, and you will be blessed. Your son will be blessed. You pray to Kṛṣṇa—wherever your son may be, he will be happy. You believe in reincarnation, next birth?"

The young man spoke to the elder executive in Japanese. The older man nodded.

Prabhupāda continued, "Yes. So your son, he must have taken a body somewhere. So if you pray to Kṛṣṇa, your son will be happy. He will benefit."

When Prabhupāda's G.B.C. secretary for the western United States, Karandhara, arrived in Tokyo to assist in dealing with the Dai Nippon Printing Company, Prabhupāda talked with him about his new project in Bombay. He also wrote two letters to Girirāja, urging him to begin constructing the Bombay buildings as soon as possible. He wanted Girirāja to model the temple after Jaipur's famous Govindajī temple and erect beside it a modern high-rise hotel. "And then you shall have the perfect Juhu plan." Prabhupāda said Hans (now Surabhi) should finish the drawings and get the city

council's approval by June so that they could begin the foundation before the monsoon. "I do not think that it is possible," Prabhupāda wrote, "but if you can try for it that will be nice."

Hawaii

May 6, 1972

During Prabhupāda's week-long stay in Honolulu, he installed the five Deities of the Pañca-tattva: Lord Caitanya, Lord Nityānanda, Śrī Advaita, Śrī Gadādhara, and Śrī Śrīvāsa. He also lectured on yoga at a local yoga-meditation center. During his morning walks on the beach, he spoke about the fallacies of Darwinism. Waikiki Beach, he commented, was not as beautiful as Juhu.

Nanda-kumāra: At that time all the devotees in Hawaii were wearing sleeveless T-shirts and bright colors, and they had really big śikhās hanging down very long. Prabhupāda said, "Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava śikha is an inch and a half across—no bigger. Bigger śikhās means another sampradāya. And they have to be knotted." So I told everyone that, and they came back all bright and shiny with saffron shirts and proper śikhās.

Govinda dāsī: Prabhupāda stayed at a big house on the Makapu side of Oahu, right on the ocean—a very pleasant place. In the morning Prabhupāda would walk on the beach, and when he would return from his walk, he would sit down on a wooden bench on a little rock patio. We would all sit around, and he would give a little morning lecture. Later he would walk around and around in his room, chanting.

One evening I went in while he was chanting, and he said, "Sixteen rounds finished today?" and I said, "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am on my sixteenth round now." He said, "That is good."

Prabhupāda was also thinking a lot about his Bombay center, and he asked me to do an architectural rendering of his idea for the Bombay buildings. Fortunately, an architect friend drew it up very nicely, and Prabhupāda was pleased with it.

Prabhupāda had received a letter from a French disciple, Mandakinī devī dāsī, who was going to join a Russian boy in the Soviet Union. She was going there to marry him and assist him in propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When Prabhupāda read this letter, he smiled in ecstasy. The thought of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement increasing in Russia gave him great joy.

Then he turned to Govinda dāsī and said, "Preach while you are young. When you are old, retire to Vṛndāvana and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, these centers in India are being built. But you cannot retire unless you have preached sufficiently. The mind will agitate. If you have preached, you can retire and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa—so preach as much as possible."

Although sometimes Prabhupāda could spend only a day or even only a moment with an individual devotee, that brief association would leave a permanent inspiration. The devotees would realize that although Prabhupāda had touched them and given them guidance in a way that made these the most important moments in their lives, Prabhupāda was also beyond the moment and the place

that he shared with them and was contemplating deeper issues and praying to Kṛṣṇa with an intensity that they could not yet understand.

Prabhupāda received a letter in Hawaii from Girirāja that made him doubt his Bombay manager's abilities to deal with the clever Mr. N. Girirāja had reported matter-of-factly that he had just paid 7,500 rupees to Mr. N., and Prabhupāda wrote back, "On what account is that paid?" Girirāja had intended it to be an installment toward the agreed two lakhs per year that they were supposed to pay Mr. N.—after they had received the deed. But why should they be unnecessarily paying Mr. N., since they still had no deed? Prabhupāda began to worry about his Hare Krishna Land.

Time and time again his thinking turned to Bombay, Vṛndāvana, and Māyāpur, but he did not talk much about the problems. Rather, the devotees and nondevotees in each place he visited got the full blessings of his attention. While lecturing on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, he was in full concentration, and when he spoke privately, cultivating a guest or guiding an individual disciple, he fully gave himself. That he took responsibility for many persons and worldwide matters and did it all so graciously, always appearing before his devotees each morning on a walk or in the temple as fresh as a morning-blooming lotus flower, was the expert nature of his devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. He was open and simple, with a motive so pure that anyone could see it, and yet he was also grave beyond anyone's vision. He served Kṛṣṇa simply in each time and place, whether riding the hotel elevator with his two disciples in Hong Kong, or curiously noting the details of Japanese culture, or walking on the beach beneath a Hawaiian sky.

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Los Angeles

May 18, 1972

Word had spread that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted G.B.C. secretaries to get out from behind their desks and preach, and four American G.B.C. men, eager to become sannyāsīs, were waiting when Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in Los Angeles.

Satsvarūpa: Prabhupāda said that because we were taking sannyāsa in the prime of youth, we had ample opportunity to do much more than he. He said he had taken sannyāsa at the fag end of life but that "a little is better than nothing." Everyone laughed at the thought that we could do more than Prabhupāda. One by one we went to the vyāsāsana, and Prabhupāda gave us our tridaṇḍas and said, "Now preach, preach, preach."

Immediately afterward, Prabhupāda had us up in his room. We asked him if there were any special instructions. He said there were two restrictions in sannyāsa life. One was that when meeting a rich man and seeing his opulent wealth we must not think, "Oh, I have given up everything, but I wish I could enjoy these things." And the other restriction was that when we see a beautiful woman we must not think, "I had a beautiful wife, and now this beautiful woman is here. I could enjoy her." In other words, do not have any regrets about having taken sannyāsa.

Jagadīśa: Prabhupāda had all the G.B.C. men come to Los Angeles, where some of them took sannyāsa, and we discussed reapportioning preaching zones. We had one special meeting with Prabhupāda. All the G.B.C. men were sitting there in the room, and Prabhupāda looked us all over. He said, "Are you all convinced?" We just sat there. Nobody said anything for about two minutes. It was one of the heaviest moments of my life—Prabhupāda challenging us: "Are you convinced? Are you sincere?"

As Prabhupāda spoke, his G.B.C. disciples listened intently. "As far as I am concerned," he said, "I am convinced. Therefore I am pushing on. It is a fact. I am pushing on because it is fact, not fiction. That much I am personally convinced. Whenever someone says, 'You believe,' I say, 'No, I do not believe. It is fact.' So you must spread your conviction by your literature, arguments, preaching, facing opposing elements. But are you convinced? If you are not convinced, then it is not good for me. The first thing is enthusiasm. Don't be dead. You have to work more than me. Anyone who has life, he can preach.

"So the local president and treasurer of the temple will manage. The G.B.C. can supervise that things are going on. But the first management is that each and every member is chanting sixteen rounds and following the regulations. Otherwise, that is our spiritual strength.

"Now it is in your hands. That was my plan—to give it to the Americans. But you have to be spiritually strong. If superficially you want to be managers, it won't be good. And simply touring is not required. By traveling you have to do something substantial to increase the society. At the time of Lenin, he had just a few men, and he took over the entire country. It is up to you to spread God consciousness. Don't be stagnant. Go and preach. Your duty is to inform them, 'My dear American brothers, you have so much wealth and pleasure. Use it for Kṛṣṇa. If not, it will be degradation.' "

Śrīla Prabhupāda met with many U.S. ISKCON leaders in Los Angeles and saw the wide array of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities in his Western world headquarters. He heard a new recording of Kṛṣṇa bhajanas, performed with guitars and other Western instruments, produced at the devotees' own Golden Avatar studio, and he approved it, saying, "This is better than George Harrison." He visited the art studio, where the devotees were painting illustrations for his books, and he made suggestions.

Anaṅga-mañjarī: Prabhupāda was going around looking at all the different temple offices. In one office Karandhara was showing Prabhupāda a new computer. "Prabhupāda," he said, "all we have to do is type the words Rūpa Gosvāmī, and then it will automatically write everything you have ever said or written about Rūpa Gosvāmī." Prabhupāda had been looking at the computer without showing much interest. But when Karandhara said the name Rūpa Gosvāmī, Prabhupāda raised his eyebrows and said, "Oh? Yes, everything can be used in Kṛṣṇa's service."

Then we walked out of that office and went to the telex machine. Prabhupāda sat before it in the chair, and everyone stood around him while Karandhara explained what the machine did. "It can write a message all the way to New York, and they can send a message back immediately, Śrīla Prabhupāda." So Karandhara typed on the telex machine, "Hare Kṛṣṇa. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Please respond."

There was no answer, so he typed it out again, and again there was no answer. So he typed it out again, and this time he typed out, "All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda is sitting right next to the telex machine. Please respond."

All of a sudden the machine started typing out a reply, and Prabhupāda was sitting there watching it. The type read, "Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, please accept our most humble obeisances at your lotus feet. We will be very eager to see Your Divine Grace in three days in New York." Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke out, "Jaya! Haribol!" The message from New York was signed by many devotees, and Prabhupāda just smiled and said, "This is very nice."

At this time, distribution of Prabhupāda's books by his disciples was taking on a new dimension in America, and Prabhupāda heard the latest reports. From the beginning of his preaching in the West he had stressed printing and distributing his books as the most important method of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He said his spiritual master had told him to print and distribute books and that he was following "blindly." Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been pleased if a disciple distributed even only a few copies of his magazine.

In the beginning years of ISKCON Śrīla Prabhupāda had also been pleased when his disciples had distributed a few hundred copies of Back to Godhead each month. Gradually his will for increasing the distribution of transcendental literature had manifested through certain devotees. In Los Angeles in 1968, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had daily taken a large kīrtana party downtown. The party, in addition to chanting and dancing, had circulated among the crowd and distributed Back to Godhead magazines, as many as a hundred in a single day. When Prabhupāda had heard these reports, he had felt encouraged and had asked for the devotees to increase.

Prabhupāda saw book distribution not only as the best method of preaching but also as a fair means of income. In India the brahmacārīs in the traditional gurukula system would beg from door to door, but in the West such a practice would not be respected. "But every gentleman will give a quarter for Back to Godhead," Prabhupāda had said.

Even as Prabhupāda turned more toward India and his projects there, he continued to encourage his disciples, especially in the West, to distribute his books: "Please increase your program of distribution to the public as well as trying to place our books and magazines in the libraries. I am simply interested in the book distribution."

To the devotees in New York he had written in 1971,

I'm especially pleased to hear that your distribution of books and magazines has increased. Go on in this way, increasing more and more. Each time someone reads some solid information about Krishna his life becomes changed in some way. These literatures are the solid ground upon which our preaching stands, so I want that they should be available to everyone, as many as possible. So please try for this.

To the devotees in Australia he wrote,

The best news is that you are increasing nicely the distribution of my books and literature. This is the best activity, to distribute solid information about Krishna. Our preaching stands solid on these books. No other movement has such vast background of authority.

And to the devotees of Africa Prabhupāda wrote,

Distribution of books and magazines is our most important activity. Without books, our preaching has no solid basis. Especially the Africans want our books.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that if there were ample books, then everything else in ISKCON would succeed.

Practically, our Society is built on books. One book is not very impressive. Still, a blind uncle is better than no uncle at all, so it is very nice that one book has appeared, and that BTG is appearing at least several issues in other languages. But now try to produce at least four or five new books per year in several languages, plus regularly BTG every month... apply yourself fully to this very great responsibility of producing numerous books in foreign languages.

Back in 1968, when ten thousand copies of Teachings of Lord Caitanya had arrived at the temple in New York, Brahmānanda Swami had wondered how they would ever distribute so many hardbound books on the lofty philosophy of Lord Caitanya. But in 1970, with the publication of another book, Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, some of the devotees in San Francisco had begun to go door to door, person to person, and sell the books. And not only one or two books, but twenty, thirty, even forty a day. The enthusiasm had spread as devotees in other temples had begun to sell increasing numbers of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Next, the young men had begun traveling in vans, going out all day, day after day, to discover the greatest ecstasy of distributing Prabhupāda's books.

Then a competition had started. Keśava's boasts that the devotees in San Francisco were the best had drawn challenges from the devotees in Los Angeles, New York, Denver, and Dallas. A "saṅkīrtana fever" had begun. And at the center was Śrīla Prabhupāda, assuring that unquestionably book distribution had the topmost priority of all his missionary activities.

Prabhupāda also stressed that all the devotees should regularly study his books. The books were not only for the public; the devotees must read them and know them. Or else how could they preach? In the Los Angeles temple room Prabhupāda would have the devotees take part in pronouncing and chanting responsively the daily Sanskrit verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Then individual devotees would take turns chanting the verse alone, while the other devotees would again respond collectively.

Hṛdayānanda Goswami: When Prabhupāda came to Los Angeles in 1972, he started the Bhāgavatam class where everyone chanted the Sanskrit. One effect was that devotees became more grave, a little more civilized. Just at that time things were a little wild in America. The saṅkīrtana parties were doing so many wild things, staying out all hours of the night, sleeping anywhere, eating anything. Previously the temples had been a little sedate, and actually, even a little dry, because the devotees weren't giving out many books. And then, when the saṅkīrtana got a little heavy, it was almost like a rodeo consciousness, this wild saṅkīrtana—like bronco busting. But Prabhupāda came and

introduced the chanting of Sanskrit mantras word for word, and the devotees submitted to a more grave and formal program.

On the first of June Śrīla Prabhupāda left Los Angeles for Mexico City. He said he would return in a few weeks.

* * *

Prabhupāda conducted an intensive three-day lecture campaign in Mexico City, speaking at the National University of Mexico, the Masonic Lodge, and the Theosophical Society, and appearing on a television show with some thirty million viewers. He also held initiations at the temple on two consecutive days. Mexico was similar to India, he said, with pious people and a tropical climate. Even when he walked early in the morning in Chapultepec Park, many people followed him back to the temple. They recognized him as a saint and wanted his benediction.

Cit-sukhānanda: On Sunday afternoon there were more than five hundred people in the temple room. After the lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda went back to his room alone, and there was a big kīrtana with five to six hundred people chanting, "Jaya Prabhupāda! Jaya Prabhupāda! Jaya Prabhu pāda! Prabhupāda! Prabhupāda! Prabhupāda!" They became very, very ecstatic, and it seemed like the temple walls were going to come down. I was in Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, and he said, "What is this? Kīrtana? They are making so much noise."

I said, "They are chanting your name." And I went down to see what was going on. And all the people were waiting to come into Prabhupāda's room. It was like they wanted to charge up to Prabhupāda's room to be able to see him. They kept yelling his name, "Prabhupāda! Prabhupāda!" So I came up to Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Prabhupāda, they want to see you."

And Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Well, let them come."

So I immediately arranged that people could come in. He had two doors in his room, and they were coming in through one door on the left side and leaving through the door on the right. One by one, in a line, they just filtered through like a great parade, coming and offering different words to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Most of the people were saying in Spanish, "Your Divine Grace, Your Holiness, please bless me. Give me your benediction." Everyone was praying for his benediction. And as the people would come in, they would bow down. Everyone was extremely submissive, and there were many people with tears in their eyes to see the great saint Śrīla Prabhupāda. And they said to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Please give me your blessings."

Prabhupāda asked me, "What are they saying?" And I said, "Give me one blessing, one benediction."

So he had his hand in his bead bag, and with his finger outside his bead bag he would point to them and say, "Hare Kṛṣṇa." And they were all very happy.

Prabhupāda also traveled to Cuernavaca, where he lectured out-of-doors at the city plaza before a crowd of thousands. The audience sat patiently and heard his words translated into Spanish.

Cit-sukhānanda: Just then we had turned out our first book, *La Conciencia de Kṛṣṇa Es el Sistema Mas Elevado de Yoga* [Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, the Topmost Yoga System], and Śrīla Prabhupāda, during his lecture at the plaza at Cuernavaca, saw Haihaya dāsa arrive with newly printed copies of this red book, *La Conciencia de Kṛṣṇa Es el Sistema Mas Elevado de Yoga*. Śrīla Prabhupāda looked at him and was very happy to see his book printed. He stopped his lecture and said, "Now you can all take one of these books and read them." And the people actually came up to Śrīla Prabhupāda to get the books. We only brought about fifty copies, but all fifty copies Śrīla Prabhupāda sold personally. The people took the liberty to ask Śrīla Prabhupāda for an autographed book, and he autographed almost all fifty copies.

After the plaza lecture there was a hotel lecture, and then Śrīla Prabhupāda was supposed to go to a devotee's home in Cuernavaca to take prasādam and rest. But Śrīla Prabhupāda decided he wanted to return to the temple in Mexico City. He got back around eight P.M., so from eight in the morning until eight that night he had not taken a bite of food, only a little water. We offered him fruit and things, but he didn't want anything.

When he returned to his room, his eyes were shining and his smile was broad, and he said, "This is the way to be happy. Work all day for Kṛṣṇa." All he wanted was a cup of hot milk with purīs and a cup of sugar. He pressed the purīs into the sugar, and he drank the milk with great joy and happiness. He said, "This is our life, to serve Kṛṣṇa. Work all day for Kṛṣṇa and take a little prasādam at night."

* * *

On returning to Los Angeles, Prabhupāda was again the center of the burgeoning Kṛṣṇa conscious activities there. But again his thoughts turned to Bombay, and he telegraphed Girirāja, instructing him to settle the conveyance immediately.

Girirāja, after receiving Prabhupāda's cable, went to Mr. N., only to learn of a further complication. After Prabhupāda had signed the sales agreement, the Indian government had passed a law obliging Mr. N. to pay a five-lakh gains tax upon executing the conveyance. Mr. N. didn't have five lakhs at present and told Girirāja that ISKCON should pay it, and he would apply it toward the mortgage. But Bombay ISKCON didn't have five lakhs either, so Mr. N. suggested Girirāja take a bank loan or secure funds from ISKCON temples in the U.S. He promised that in the meantime he would not sell the land to anyone else.

Girirāja tried to get a loan from the bank, but he had no security or credit. He turned to some of the life members for help, to see if they could act as guarantors for a loan. But although sympathetic, they could not help him raise the money.

Girirāja also began to doubt Mr. N.'s word. Although naive about legal matters, Girirāja was becoming suspicious of Mr. N.'s character and of his dealings. Talking with life members, Girirāja learned that actually Mr. N. was notorious for illegal business tactics. When previously Mr. N. had signed an agreement with C. Company for the very same land he was now selling to Prabhupāda, the sales agreement had eventually been canceled because C. Company had not gotten permission

from the municipality for subdividing plots of land—and one of the conditions of Mr. N.'s sale of the land had been that C. Company get government permission to use the land. According to some of the businessmen with whom Girirāja spoke, Mr. N., through his political connections, had influenced the government against the C. Company.

Mr. N. had seemed very helpful, giving the devotees a good price for the land, and even providing workers for clearing it. And Mrs. N. had often attended Prabhupāda's classes. But there also seemed to be many contradictions in Mr. N.'s behavior.

Hearing of these problems by mail, Prabhupāda considered them manageable. If a government tax had been imposed, then the devotees should deal with that and also continue trying for a loan. Certainly Mr. N. was tricky, but Prabhupāda felt ISKCON's position was strong. Girirāja should persist, without becoming confused by Mr. N. Prabhupāda advised Girirāja to approach Mrs. Sumati Morarji and other supporters for financial help.

It is a unique temple in the world and if you show your wonderful abilities as American and European boys and girls to manage everything superbly, she will not hesitate to entrust you in every way. Therefore, there must always be good will and cooperation amongst yourselves for this huge task ahead. I always think of our Juhu place, and I want that it shall be the model for all the world to emulate and respect as the perfect example of a Krishna Conscious community.

Portland, Oregon

June 8, 1972

From Los Angeles Prabhupāda went briefly to Portland, where fifty of his disciples from San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver, as well as Portland, had congregated to meet him. From Portland he rode by car to Eugene, where he lectured at a large hall before an audience of mostly hippies.

Every temple in the U.S. wanted Śrīla Prabhupāda, and although Prabhupāda could not visit them all, he remained open to brief visits and public lectures in faraway places. He would sometimes confide to his traveling secretary that his disciples should do this preaching; but then another lecture opportunity would arise, promoted by an enthusiastic group of devotees, and Prabhupāda would surprise everyone by agreeing to go.

After returning to Los Angeles for four days, Prabhupāda then flew to New York for a week and then on to London for two weeks. In London George Harrison and Ravi Shankar visited him several times at the Bury Place temple. When George asked if he should shave his head and try to live like the other devotees, Prabhupāda replied that he should continue to be a singer. "If you tell people to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda reminded George, "they will do it."

July 20

From England Prabhupāda went to Paris, where he lectured and performed an outdoor initiation ceremony at the Luxembourg Gardens. Hundreds of people, most of them student radicals from the

nearby university, gathered to watch. Śrīla Prabhupāda began his talk, saying, "You French people have a history of being revolutionary, because you are looking for a better way of life." When the words were translated into French, the students cheered and applauded. Śrīla Prabhupāda continued, "Therefore, you should inquire into this Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is a revolutionary movement for reviving our original God consciousness." About thirty devotees from Germany had come to Paris, and most of them, along with many devotees from England, Amsterdam, and Paris, received initiation that day at Luxembourg Gardens. In Paris Prabhupāda also attended a successful four-day indoor festival, where he was pleased to lecture and lead kīrtanas each night.

July 26

In Amsterdam Prabhupāda installed deities of Lord Jagannātha, Lord Balarāma, and Subhadrā and lectured at Vondelpark before thousands of hippies. One day at Vondelpark a devotee was addressing the crowd when Prabhupāda suddenly told his disciples to stop. "These people are useless," he said. "Just hold kīrtana."

Later he wrote to a disciple in the West,

We are observing here in Europe many, many hippies have become so disgusted with material life, but they are also now so much degraded that they will not hear our philosophy, simply mocking. So our devotees may become very much learned to remove their doubts and become very much fixed up in Krishna consciousness. But so far preaching to the general public, especially the hippie class, it is better not to preach very much philosophy, just somehow or other get them to chant Hare Krishna mantra, and if some of them are curious to learn something, they may purchase one of our books. Only if they chant with us, that will help them.

July 29

At Edinburgh Prabhupāda was greeted by almost a dozen reporters from various newspapers in Scotland.

Kiśora: Edinburgh is a stuffy, puffed-up, tradition-steeped place, but Prabhupāda was very cordial and humble with the reporters. He was giving them so much credit about how nice the country was and how nice Edinburgh was—what nice buildings we have here—and he was saying, "You have two colleges here?" "Yes, yes, we have two." Very proud they were. "So you have many students here?" "Yes, yes." "It's a very affluent city, Edinburgh?" "Yes, oh, yes, very rich and opulent." And then Prabhupāda said, "So you have so many students, and you have so many nice big, big buildings. You have so much facility for enjoyment." And they were agreeing: "Yes, yes, we have all this." And Prabhupāda just looked at them straight and said, "Then why are your universities producing hippies?"

They looked at one another, and no one could answer. And Prabhupāda began to explain how society cannot bring happiness or contentment simply with buildings. "Stones and windows," he said. "Where is the happiness there?"

In Glasgow Prabhupāda lectured at Woodside Hall before an audience of almost one thousand.

Kiśora: Prabhupāda was sitting onstage on his vyāsāsana. The crowd was very large, and even the balcony was overflowing. When Prabhupāda arrived, the students greeted him like a pop star. They were cheering and whistling. Prabhupāda immediately began lecturing very heavily on the basic science of Bhagavad-gītā—how Arjuna became a successful devotee by killing all his friends and relatives. At the end of the lecture, I was a little apprehensive as to whether the people would accept that heavy lecture or not. But they cheered and applauded.

When it came to question-and-answer time, one man came all the way down the aisle from the back of the hall and stood at the foot of the stage and looked up at Prabhupāda. For several moments he spoke, on and on and on, talking very proudly—"I am this. I am that"—and then concluding, "I am God." That was the conclusion of his little monologue. The whole crowd was hushed, and I thought, "What's going to happen now?" Prabhupāda simply looked down and let the silence continue for a few moments more. Then Prabhupāda spoke. "So, you are God—you have nothing more to say? You are not God—you are dog." And immediately the crowd stood up and applauded and cheered. The man just looked at Prabhupāda, and a smile came on his face. With just those few words he had been defeated. He simply walked all the way back again to the back of the hall and was finished. It was ecstatic, because the crowd was participating in the whole thing. They all realized that God is not cheap.

Then we had kīrtana, and everyone in the audience was dancing. At that time they had gotten a bit lax at the door, and the local street urchins from this low-class area of Glasgow came into the hall, and they all began dancing and singing. Some of them tried to get up on the stage. Prabhupāda was also chanting, and so these kids were all trying to get around him and get on the stage to chant. The devotees started to push these dirty little children off the stage, but Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Don't do that. These children are all devotees. Let them chant."

When Prabhupāda finally got up to leave again, he reminded me of some big celebrity. He was smiling and waving and walking off the stage, and the audience were all shouting, "No, no, no!" They began chanting, "More, more, more, more!"

August 1

When Prabhupāda returned to London and heard that Sumati Morarji was arriving there, he went with a group of his disciples to meet her at the airport. He talked with her about his plans for Hare Krishna Land at Juhu and of his desire to form a board of trustees consisting of ISKCON's Bombay life members. Sumati Morarji agreed to be president of the board, which would meet regularly and give advice for managing ISKCON's Bombay project. Each trustee would also contribute a large sum of money toward developing a particular area of the project. Prabhupāda asked Mrs. Morarji to donate for the temple. He would request Mr. Khandelwal to donate for the library and Mr. N. for the two other wings.

That Mr. N. had not yet produced the deed, however, continued to weigh heavily on Prabhupāda's mind, and he questioned Mr. N.'s intentions and Girirāja's competence. If the only obstacle was the five-lakh tax, then Prabhupāda had already instructed Girirāja to approach ISKCON's wealthy friends and secure a loan. What was the difficulty? But Girirāja's communications sounded as if

such a solution was "impossible." On August 27 Prabhupāda telegraphed Girirāja: "HAS CONVEYANCE DEED BEEN SIGNED IF NOT FINISH IMMEDIATELY AND WIRE DETAILS."

Again Girirāja went to Mr. N., although anticipating Mr. N.'s reply. This time, however, Mr. N. added yet another complication, reminding Girirāja that ISKCON had not yet obtained permission from the charity commissioner. ISKCON was a public charitable trust and so required permission from the charity commissioner before acquiring property. Mr. N. put the burden back onto ISKCON.

At the charity commissioner's office, Girirāja learned that he should have applied for permission six months prior to signing the agreement for the land. To Girirāja and the other devotees in Bombay, the affair had become a huge Gordian knot.

* * *

New Vrindaban, West Virginia

August 30, 1972

Only two days remained until the Janmāṣṭamī celebration, and more than three hundred disciples had gathered to be with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Janmāṣṭamī, Kṛṣṇa's appearance day, is always followed immediately by Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance day, and this year, with so many devotees gathered in a holy place with Prabhupāda, the occasion promised to be especially auspicious.

Prabhupāda had agreed to lecture every evening in an outdoor pavilion, constructed for the occasion atop one of New Vrindaban's many hills. The lecture series was titled "Bhāgavata Dharma Discourses," and through these meetings Prabhupāda set an example for his disciples that they hold similar festivals in other parts of the country. Through bhāgavata-dharma discourses and book distribution, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would increase its purifying influence throughout the world.

Prabhupāda lived during these days in a small wood-frame house in the New Vrindaban woods. He regularly received visitors and lectured in the evening. Each evening, before his lecture at the pavilion, the devotees would hold a kīrtana and carry Prabhupāda up the long, steep hill on a palanquin; and afterward, as they carried him back down, he would be surrounded by chanting disciples bearing lanterns and torches.

Sureśvara: The path from the pavilion wound down and around on its way to the temple. I got there at dusk and beheld Śrīla Prabhupāda floating jubilantly in his palanquin atop a sea of devotees. There were hundreds of devotees, with tumultuous kīrtana and roaring, plus dust was being kicked up everywhere from all the people. It looked spectacular, like a panoramic scene from one of those epic movies, *The Ten Commandments* or *Exodus*, only much more, because it was transcendental. I just fell down in the dust as Prabhupāda's palanquin came gliding past. It was very wild, but devotional.

Baṭu Gopāla: It was a small palanquin carried by four men. There were some ropes for Prabhupāda to hold on to, and it wasn't a very comfortable ride for him. But it was an amazing scene. Devotees with torches—electric torches and fire torches and lanterns—and Prabhupāda coming down in his palanquin, down the trail. Hundreds of devotees were surrounding him. Kīrtana was roaring. I kept trying to get up close to Prabhupāda and get a glance.

Jāhnavā-devī dāśī: We were running down the steep hill in the dark amid the loud chanting of a river of devotees. And our feet seemed to never touch the ground. About halfway down, I caught up to the palanquin. But then I realized that being close to Śrīla Prabhupāda meant far more than physical proximity and that I needed to become much more serious about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in order to feel less distant from him.

On Janmāṣṭamī night Prabhupāda went to the temple and listened to readings from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead about Lord Kṛṣṇa's birth. Around two A.M. he noticed many devotees were nodding. "You are getting tired," he said, smiling, and he ended the program.

Even in the midst of such a large festival, Prabhupāda was again plunged into the struggle over the Bombay land. A letter arrived from Girirāja explaining his failure to secure the five-lakhs loan owed the government and the government's refusal to grant permission. He also mentioned his suspicion that Mr. N. was influencing the charity commissioner's decision.

Prabhupāda had a copy of the purchase agreement with him, and he studied it carefully. Again he concluded that his position was strong, since he was occupying the land according to the terms of the agreement. He had paid two lakhs as promised, but Mr. N. had not turned over the deed. Now more money was being demanded, and Prabhupāda had said Girirāja should pay this money and get the deed. As for the permission from the government charity commissioner, there was no mention of it in the agreement. Although Mr. N.'s tactics were apparently bewildering Girirāja, Prabhupāda saw them as only empty bluffs. He telegraphed Girirāja, "TAKE BANK MORTGAGE PAY OFF N." Before receiving any reply from Girirāja, Prabhupāda sent another telegram: "WHY DO YOU SAY CONVEYANCE IMPOSSIBLE EVERYTHING CLEAR IN AGREEMENT OF PURCHASE CONVEYANCE TO BE EXECUTED IMMEDIATELY ACCORDING TO TERMS OF AGREEMENT OF PURCHASE."

On Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance-day morning, he went up the hill to the pavilion to speak. It was a beautiful late summer's day, and he sat on the stage on a red vyāsāsana beside the Deities of Rādhā-Dāmodara and Lord Jagannātha. In addition to hundreds of his disciples, hundreds of guests were also present, the entire audience numbering about one thousand. The festival was a newsworthy turnout of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and reporters from The New York Times and other newspapers were on hand, along with television film crews.

Prabhupāda spoke, explaining how, although an observer might misunderstand the devotees' worship of their spiritual master, no one should think that the spiritual master was presenting himself as God. Prabhupāda compared the spiritual master to a tax collector. As the tax collector collects money only on behalf of the king, so the spiritual master receives honor, but on behalf of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Everyone should serve and bow down to the Supreme Lord, and the spiritual master

comes and “collects” obeisances and worship on behalf of God, who accepts any sincere worship of the spiritual master as an offering to Himself.

Prabhupāda ended his lecture, and a great feast climaxed the day and a half of fasting. Prabhupāda then returned to the back yard of his little house, where he talked with some of the devotees.

Hṛdayānanda Goswami: Prabhupāda was taking his massage, sitting on a straw mat outside his cabin. Suddenly, two little kittens appeared by his mat. And they were rolling around, tumbling. They were wrestling, tumbling, rolling around and around. Immediately I thought, “Oh! They are contaminated. I have to get them away.” The cats actually tumbled right onto Prabhupāda's mat. They rolled in a little furry ball right over to Prabhupāda's feet. Prabhupāda began tickling them under their chins. He was laughing, rubbing under their chins. Then he turned to me, sort of in a very jolly mood, and said, “Just see, even here there is love.”

Śrutakīrti: I was in charge of the kitchen, so I was too busy to see Prabhupāda at all. He was there for a week, and practically the whole time I didn't get to see him. I was so upset. I was doing all this service, and I had no opportunity to see Prabhupāda—always cooking until midnight. I felt so bad.

So the day before Prabhupāda left, Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja came up to me and said, “So you are going to be Prabhupāda's servant.” I said, “Oh, no! This is wonderful! No, this is terrible!” I was so worried. Then he said, “You'll be leaving tomorrow morning to go to Pittsburgh.” I thought, “Wow, that was quick! I didn't know anything about it.”

The following morning Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja brought me over to the farmhouse Prabhupāda was staying at. He took me into Prabhupāda's room and said, “This is Śrutakīrti. He is going to be your servant.” Prabhupāda looked, and I paid my obeisances. Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja said, “He cooks very well, Prabhupāda.” And Prabhupāda said, “That's very good.” “But he hasn't massaged,” Mahārāja said. I had never done it before in my life. And then Prabhupāda said, “That's all right. Anybody can massage. It is very easy.”

Satya-nārāyaṇa: I was with a group of devotees. We would travel around the country in an old bus, preaching. On the bus we had Deities, a kitchen, and a shower. Prabhupāda was outside of his cabin when we drove up in the bus. When he came on, we received him just as in a regular temple, and we gave him caraṇāmṛta. He looked at everything and said that there should be hundreds of buses like this. It wasn't such a big event for him, but he really liked it.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: I saw different leading devotees go down to that house to see Śrīla Prabhupāda on important business. I had no important business that hadn't been answered by him in letters, but I began to feel anxious that I was not going to him while others were. Finally, one day my anxiety grew so great that I decided I would go and see His Divine Grace.

When I arrived at the door of the house, Prabhupāda's servant gladly let me in, and in a moment I was seated before Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was seated to take his massage. I expressed to Śrīla Prabhupāda that I had no very urgent questions to ask him in particular, but that I had become anxious to see him, and so I had come. Prabhupāda replied that I should know better than to come to him out of such anxiety. He said he had already answered everything in his books. Actually, this

was very inspiring. On the one hand, he was telling me that as an older devotee I should be assured that by studying his books everything was there. Not that out of anxiety I should feel a lacking and on an impulse have to personally see my guru.

But now, since I was in his presence, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked me, "What are you doing?" When Śrīla Prabhupāda said that, I got the strong impression that he was regarding me in the proper place, as a tiny fool. Here I had just been initiated sannyāsa, and I was coming before Prabhupāda with my assistant and asking for his attention. Now that I had asked for his attention, he gave me a surveillance-glance, and by his question he seemed to imply that I was doing nothing or very, very little to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That was how I interpreted his question, "What are you doing?"

I replied that I was, according to the instruction that I had received from him in a letter, going from temple to temple in my zone and implementing his desire that the students there study the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in the morning class. I had previously felt very confident that I was exactly following direct orders I had been given in a letter from him. But to my surprise, in that room in New Vrindaban, he began to tell me that visiting temples was not the most important thing. He said that he was pleased with the program of Viṣṇujana Mahārāja, who was traveling on a bus. He said I should do like that.

I immediately replied, "Then your instruction that I should go to the different temples is not very important? I should take a bus?" And Śrīla Prabhupāda became annoyed and said, "It is not that because one thing is more important the other thing is less important. Everything is important. Not that just because I say this is important, to travel in a bus, now you say traveling to the temples is not important. Kṛṣṇa's head is important, and Kṛṣṇa's foot is important. Everything about Him is important."

While Prabhupāda participated fully, both formally and informally, at New Vrindaban, he still carried a special burden of concern for Bombay. Although he had appointed G.B.C. secretaries to oversee the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in various parts of the world, he was the real G.B.C. secretary of India. Wherever he traveled, therefore, he remained partial to those projects.

He was setting the perfect example of a G.B.C. secretary. While conscientiously tending to practical affairs, he remained always transcendental—fully dependent on Kṛṣṇa and always preaching. After drafting a telegram to Girirāja or hearing of difficulties in Bombay, he would immediately return to his peaceful routine and active preaching. He would take his late-morning massage, bathe, put on tilaka methodically and delicately, say his Gāyatrī mantra with silent composure, take his prasādam, rest for an hour, and in the evening, after a full day's activities, go into the temple room of whatever temple he happened to be in, sit on the vyāsāsana and chant Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava, and speak pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

September 8

After New Vrindaban Prabhupāda went to Pittsburgh, where he attended a successful engagement at a large hall, the Syria Mosque. He also met with a Catholic bishop, whom he asked, "Why do the Christians kill cows in slaughterhouses and thus break the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'?"

Prabhupāda had often asked this question of Christian priests and was always unsatisfied with the answer. This was no exception.

In an informal gathering in his room, Prabhupāda stressed outgoing preaching programs, and he advised his newly initiated sannyāsīs present to follow the example of their Godbrother Viṣṇujana Swami: to travel in a bus from town to town and hold festivals and distribute books and magazines.

* * *

September 9

The devotees in Dallas had purchased a large church facility and were forming the first ISKCON children's school, known as Gurukula. Prabhupāda, while traveling in India during 1971 and 1972, had sent a series of letters to the Dallas teachers, explaining the basic direction he wanted them to take for beginning a Kṛṣṇa conscious primary school.

We will teach the basic requirements of reading and writing but also give them real spiritual knowledge how to live perfectly. What other school of learning offers such a wonderful educational opportunity?... Last night the topic of my lecture at our Delhi pandal was the necessity for teaching Krishna Consciousness in all our schools and colleges. This is a revolutionary thought. But we have seen that the practical outcome of so much godless education in technology and science is that they are producing only hippies, one after another. What is the use of their skyscraper buildings if their sons will not maintain them? The old system of gurukula should be revived as the perfect example of a system designed to produce great men, sober and responsible leaders, who know what is the real welfare of the citizens. Just as in former days, all big, big personalities were trained in this way. Now you have got the responsibility to inject this idea in your country. Please do it with a cool head, and very soon we shall see the practical benefit for your countrymen.

These letters had assured the Dallas devotees that they were doing the most important work for the pleasure of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The school had gained support from other ISKCON members, and many parents had sent their children. By the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda's visit, about fifty students were enrolled.

Prabhupāda said Dallas's weather reminded him of Calcutta, even though he felt uncomfortably hot. Disdaining the use of air conditioning, he shed his kurtā and sat on the lawn with his inexperienced but eager group of teachers. The best system of education, he said, was as he had known as a child: one teacher in a room with up to fifty students of various ages and aptitudes. One at a time the students would come to the teacher's desk, receive guidance and a further assignment, and then return to work.

The gurukula teachers were particularly concerned and puzzled about how to discipline children without being punitive, and Prabhupāda unhesitatingly solved all their puzzles. He said the students should both fear and love their teachers. The teacher, by stern countenance, may threaten an unruly child and make him submit, but the teacher should not hit the child.

The next day Śrīla Prabhupāda went into a classroom and sat on a cushion before the class. Holding a blackboard pointer in each hand, he joked that one stick could be used for hitting the students' heads and the other for hitting their hands. The children and teachers became delighted to see Prabhupāda's playful mood. And when he asked if anyone wanted to get hit, both teachers and students moved forward, holding their hands out for a merciful slap from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

To demonstrate how to teach, Prabhupāda called for a volunteer. Dvārakādhīśa came forward. Prabhupāda, placing his venerable hand over the boy's, guided him repeatedly in forming the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet.

News of Bombay followed Prabhupāda to Dallas. A devotee who had recently come to the West from Bombay informed Prabhupāda of Girirāja's recent talk of resigning as president of the center. Depressed by his ineffectiveness in dealing with Mr. N., the lawyers, and the government, and harassed by bickering and uncooperative devotees, he was considering himself unworthy to keep the charge.

Now Girirāja's anxiety became Prabhupāda's as again he concerned himself with all the affairs of his Juhu project. There seemed to be no one he could discuss this with, since the devotees in America knew almost nothing of matters in Bombay.

The night was too hot for sleeping, and Prabhupāda could not concentrate on translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. So he stayed up late, talking with his secretary about Bombay. Surmising the mind and mood of Mr. N. and expressing his concern for his Hare Krishna Land and his wonder at the devotees' hesitation and disheartenment, he turned the argument this way and that, considering it in different lights, until in the early morning he finally put it aside. Afterward, he composed another telegram: "SETTLE LAND IMMEDIATELY AT BEST PRICE POSSIBLE N. PROMISED TO PAY IT IF HE WONT WE CAN PAY SUGGEST 15000 DON'T CHANGE PRESIDENCY UNTIL I COME."

Large marble Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa arrived in Dallas by trailer from New York. Prabhupāda had specifically selected these Deities for Dallas Gurukula while in India and ordered Them to be shipped to the United States. The Kṛṣṇa Deity was magnificent. He was tall, bigger than most ISKCON Deities, and His limbs and head were strikingly large. According to one story, the Deity was several hundred years old and therefore carved according to an ancient tradition. Even though the devotees in Dallas were unprepared to install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, Prabhupāda told them to get ready in two days for the installation, which he would personally perform.

Jāhnava-devī dāsī, however, unauthorizedly removed the original paint from the Deities and began to repaint Them. When Prabhupāda heard this, he became furious. He called the Dallas president, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, to his room and demanded an explanation. Satsvarūpa said that he was a fool but that Jāhnava had also acted without his permission.

Prabhupāda then called for Jāhnava and yelled at her furiously. She began to cry. "Why have you done this?" Śrīla Prabhupāda demanded.

"Nonsense," was her choked reply.

"Nonsense," Śrīla Prabhupāda affirmed, "suicidal nonsense! You are a nonsense, and you will always remain a nonsense. So, what are you going to do about this?"

"Well, Śrīla Prabhupāda," Jāhnava replied weakly, "I called up Baradrāja in Los Angeles, and he said if I use a certain kind of paint..."

"Baradrāja!" Prabhupāda yelled. "Who is this Baradrāja! I am your spiritual master, and I am sitting before you. Why do you not ask me?" Disgusted, he then turned to the others in the room. "So, what is to be done about this?" One of the ladies said that with a quick-drying paint, they could repaint the Deities just as before in time for the installation. "Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "Do it immediately."

Jāhnava stayed up all night, carefully repainting the Deities as before. Early the next morning, which was to be the morning of the Deity in stallation, Kṛṣṇa looked very beautiful, although His body was tacky in spots from the fresh paint.

During that morning's walk around White Rock Lake, while talking philosophically about various topics, Prabhupāda turned casually to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja and asked about the preparations for the installation. When Satsvarūpa said he was uncertain whether Kṛṣṇa's paint would be dry enough, Prabhupāda suddenly stopped. If the Deities weren't ready, he said, there was no use in his staying any longer in Dallas. Turning to his secretary, he told him to change their flight reservations as soon as possible. Satsvarūpa begged forgiveness and said that maybe everything could still be done on schedule. Prabhupāda's angry mood changed, and he continued walking, talking about other matters.

Later in his room, Prabhupāda talked alone to Satsvarūpa, continuing on the point of his morning lecture about materialistic life. In a casual way, as most people would talk about ordinary things, Prabhupāda spoke of the foolishness of the conditioned souls. "They think that just by having a big family and being absorbed in mundane activities they do not have to concern themselves with death or with the next life." As Prabhupāda spoke, he shook his head in disbelief, considering the incredulous position of the materialist.

All of Prabhupāda's disciples noted the same amazing thing about him: wherever he went, his consciousness was always in transcendence. Whether staying up late worrying and talking about Bombay, or criticizing devotees for repainting the Deity, his mind was ever moving from one Kṛṣṇa conscious consideration to another. The devotees with him would sometimes observe his awesome Kṛṣṇa consciousness from a respectful distance. At other times they might, in the name of service, speak up and become more personally involved. Or they might find themselves thrust under the direct scrutiny of his demanding attention. No one could presume or accurately predict in what way Prabhupāda would act in his constant, grave service to his spiritual master.

While sitting with Satsvarūpa Mahārāja, Prabhupāda began humming and singing a Sanskrit phrase from the morning's Bhāgavatam class, gṛheṣu gṛha-medhinām... Then he asked, "So, how is the Deity?" Satsvarūpa said he thought He was dry.

Prabhupāda stood and walked into the room where Jāhnava was examining the repainted Deity. Calmly he stood before Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, singing to himself. "Yes," he said, "now it's all right."

Later that morning in the temple room, Prabhupāda sat on his vyāsāsana and installed Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, reciting the prayers from the *Brahma-saṁhitā*. He then offered the first āraṭi to the Deities, who had been hastily dressed and placed on an almost bare altar. Prabhupāda seemed pleased, however, and later went up to his room and wrote on a piece of paper, "Radha Kalachandji, the Deity of Dallas, September 12, 1972—A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." Kālacandajī, he said, meant "black moon."

* * *

Prabhupāda was preparing to return soon to India via a western route, and he paid another visit to his Western world headquarters in Los Angeles. On the very day he arrived, however, he wrote more directions to the devotees in Bombay, reassuring them the Juhu land was not just a trouble spot but a special place where a great plan would be carried out. It was worth fighting for.

... now I am anxious to hear if the conveyance deed has been signed and what are the contents. Kindly send me the copy duly signed as quickly as possible. This will give me great relief. As soon as the conveyance has been signed you may begin the building work immediately. I am coming to India soon, at least by October, and I want to see that the building projects in Bombay, Mayapur and Vṛndavana are going on nicely. This Bombay project is one of our most important projects in the whole world and I am looking to you and the others there in Bombay to see that it is done very magnificently.

Prabhupāda's secretary had recently shown him a new advertisement booklet printed by Air India in which the art theme was exclusively dedicated to Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. Prabhupāda was encouraged to see that Air India was enticing tourists to come to India to experience Kṛṣṇa culture. This confirmed his idea that in the future Hare Krishna Land and his other Indian projects would be important showpieces for tourists wanting to experience real Vedic culture.

Mail from Bombay always received first priority, and every morning Prabhupāda would ask for news from Bombay, giving any letter from Girirāja immediate attention. Early in October he received a long letter from Girirāja.

We just cannot control the material nature, and although everything is going on slow, Mrs. Morarjee, Mr. Munim, the bank, and Mr. N. all feel that they are proceeding as quickly as possible. And they do not respond very favorably to being overreminded by me of the urgency of the matter and of Your anxiety that it be finished.

Nothing new had developed; the deed still had not been signed.

Although Girirāja said he now had no intentions of resigning his post, Prabhupāda, after studying the letter, concluded that other senior devotees in India should also help. He therefore wrote to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Bhavānanda, both in Vṛndāvana, asking them to go immediately to Bombay and try to expedite the conveyance.

Prabhupāda was asking Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami to revive his active status as a manager in India.

... Girirāja is finding difficulty, from his letter I can understand. So I think you have to revive your position as G.B.C. again and look after all the business of India affairs nicely.

Prabhupāda also wrote Girirāja, informing him that other devotees were coming to help and reminding him to also work with the board of trustees.

I cannot tax my brain so much from such distant places as to what to do if there is any difficulty, therefore I am relying completely on you, my trusted senior disciples, to finish up these things nicely.

Prabhupāda repeatedly instructed the managers in Bombay not to deviate from the terms of the purchase agreement. He was willing, as a matter of concession, to pay the five lakhs, to be deducted from the total price. But no more changes. The devotees should press Mr. N. to the original agreement.

Prabhupāda was worried that he had not heard from his lawyer, Mr. D. Two weeks before, he had telegraphed both Mr. N. and Mr. D., asking for reports on the delays, but he had received no replies from either of them. He had since written to another lawyer, a friend in Bombay, asking about the delay, and in Los Angeles he received the reply: Mr. D. was no longer his attorney. A couple of days after receiving this shocking news, Prabhupāda received a formal letter from the office of Mr. D, informing him of the same.

Of all the recent news from Bombay, this was the most disturbing. Prabhupāda began to see how Mr. N. had been devising a devious plot from the beginning. It was not just a matter of slowness or bureaucratic delay; Mr. D. had been in league with Mr. N. They were cheaters. So now it was going to be a real fight. ISKCON would have to go to court and file criminal charges against Mr. N. There was no avoiding the fight, but Prabhupāda still felt that his position was legally very strong.

Before leaving Los Angeles, Prabhupāda thought of a further tactic. He wrote to Girirāja that he should put a notice in the newspapers advising the public that ISKCON had signed an agreement for purchasing Mr. N.'s land at Juhu. He then traveled to Berkeley.

October 6

During his brief visit to Berkeley, Prabhupāda met with a group of professors from the University of California and also installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in the Berkeley temple. But still he was meditating on Bombay. He wrote to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami,

The Bombay dealing has been muddled by the tactics of Mr. N. and Mr. D. Girirāja is in trouble. He is a child in these worldly dealings, so immediately go to help him... But you must be careful to pay the money in the court (registrar's office) and not in the hand of Mr. N. or his solicitor... Settle up the things properly, otherwise let us go to the court for specific action, either civic or criminal against the tactics of Mr. N.

Prabhupāda decided to send Karandhara, whom he considered expert, to help in Bombay. He also wanted to send Śyāmasundara, but Śyāma sundara had gone to London regarding a large country estate George Harrison was donating. Prabhupāda notified Śyāmasundara, however, that once the London transaction was completed, he should go to Bombay. Prabhupāda was ready for the fight. He would not be cheated.

During his return trip to India, Prabhupāda again visited Hawaii. Then on October 11 he went for the first time to Manila, where a small number of disciples had arranged preaching programs for him, both in the temple and at the Hotel Intercontinental.

In Manila Prabhupāda carefully considered his position regarding the Juhu property and concluded that he would come out victorious. He listed the points of his argument in a letter to Girirāja.

1. We have fulfilled all the conditions as purchaser.
2. Mr. N. has purposefully delayed with a motive to cheat us as he had done with some others in this connection.
3. But this time he cannot cheat us because we are in possession of the land and our deity Radha-Krishna is installed there.
4. Therefore we must immediately go to the court for enforcing him to execute the conveyance immediately.
5. Even if the court case goes on for a long time, still our business there cannot be stopped.
6. Without going to the court, we cannot make any compromise with him.
7. But I think we can arrange the full amount of 14 lacs to get out this rascal out of the scene.
8. But we cannot do it without going to the court otherwise we shall become a party for breaking the purchase agreement. Therefore we have to go to the court before making any compromise.

SPL 41: The Battle for Bombay

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

The Battle for Bombay

= Vṛndāvana

October 17, 1972

Prabhupāda had come to Vṛndāvana to observe the Kārttika season (from October 16 to November 14). He planned to lecture daily at the samādhi of Rūpa Gosvāmī in the courtyard of the Rādhā-

Dāmodara temple, speaking from *The Nectar of Devotion*, his own translation of Rūpa Gosvāmī's book, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. On his Western tour he had invited devotees to join him for Kārttika in Vṛndāvana, and now a few dozen devotees from America, Europe, India, and other parts of the world had gathered to be with him.

He was concerned with developing his Vṛndāvana project, so rather than immediately rushing to Bombay, he had come here first, sending some of his leading disciples to tackle the problems in Bombay. Now, like a general engaged on a different front, he awaited word from his lieutenants in Bombay. He moved into his two small rooms at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, while his disciples stayed nearby in the former palace of the Mahārāja of Bharatpur, an old building near the Yamunā.

Although Prabhupāda was introducing his disciples to Vṛndāvana, he was also introducing the residents of Vṛndāvana to his disciples. Already his group was encountering some of the same attitudes Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and his party of pilgrims had met in 1932: the people's refusal to accept lowborn persons as Vaiṣṇavas. Prabhupāda trusted, however, that if his disciples could construct a wonderful temple for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the hearts of the Vṛndāvana residents would change, and they would accept his disciples. He tolerated the roughness and slowness of his disciples, and when Vṛndāvana residents came to see him, he humbly requested they also overlook his disciples' faults and recognize them as genuine devotees of Kṛṣṇa; after all, they had given up sinful life and were regularly chanting the holy names of God.

Prabhupāda lectured both morning and evening. Sitting on a simple āsana about two feet high, a bare bulb suspended over his head, Prabhupāda would address his disciples and the few interested guests who sat before him.

Some of the devotees had speculated that since they were now in Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda would probably talk on highly elevated spiritual topics, such as Kṛṣṇa's rasa with the gopīs. But it was not so. Rather, one of his disciples would read from *The Nectar of Devotion*, and Prabhupāda would interject extensive philosophical comments on attaining pure love of Kṛṣṇa through the successive stages of bhakti-yoga.

While Prabhupāda's talks were especially for his disciples, he also stressed that the brāhmaṇas of India accept the Western Vaiṣṇavas. And he cited dozens of scriptural references to prove his point that birth status, being a material designation, did not apply in spiritual life. Stressing preaching as the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he urged the disciples present to continue propagating the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Prabhupāda's disciples were thrilled by these talks and by Prabhupāda's personal dealings with them in the intimate atmosphere of his rooms at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, which he referred to as his "eternal residence," the place where he had actually begun his plans for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. His disciples could hear him rise early and begin translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and dictating his purports. At āraṭi time, he would open the shutters of his room and behold the Deities. At other times the devotees might see him walking on the terrace chanting japa. And they found him always available to answer their questions and help them with their personal problems.

* * *

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, Śyāmasundara, and Karandhara arrived in Bombay. Things had worsened, Girirāja informed them. When Mr. N. had seen the notice in the newspaper publicly advising that ISKCON had entered into an agreement for the Juhu property, he had become furious. Girirāja had gone to him with folded hands and bowed down before him, but Mr. N. would not be appeased. He had gone back on all his promises and had canceled the sales agreement, on the plea that the devotees had not obtained the deed within a six-month period. The two-lakh down payment, he had claimed, was now his, and the devotees should vacate the land immediately.

Mr. N. had shut off the water supply to Hare Krishna Land. Several days later, a hoodlum had shown up at the entrance to the property, brandishing a machete whenever devotees passed by. A friend of Mr. N. had printed a handbill ascribing scandalous behavior to the American Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees and was having it distributed at the nearby Vile Parle train station. Although a few devotees had left and others wanted to, about thirty devotees still remained in Bombay.

The first thing to do, Karandhara said, was to find a new lawyer, and he went to Bombay's most prominent solicitors and hired a specialist in land transactions and conveyances. Next, the leading devotees and their solicitor met with Mr. N. in his office. Mr. N. was stubborn and uncooperative, and the ISKCON lawyer was threatening. A court battle seemed inevitable.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, Karandhara, Bhavānanda, and Śyāmasundara talked together, and the more they talked, the more they began to see the entire Juhu scheme as impossible. Even without Mr. N.'s treachery, just to live on the land was very difficult. The devotees and the Deities had such poor living facilities that the roof leaked and the cement floor was crumbling. Rats, flies, cockroaches, village dogs, and mosquitoes infested the place—with even an occasional poisonous snake. Devotees were always contracting tropical diseases, especially malaria and hepatitis.

So although ISKCON's new lawyer was prepared to take the case to court, the devotees were hesitant. Mr. N. had said that they—not he—were criminals, because they had not gotten permission from the charity commissioner; they were on his land illegally. He said he would sue for damages. He even seemed to be on the verge of some violent action. Considering all angles, the leaders whom Prabhupāda had entrusted to solve the Juhu entanglement decided that ISKCON should relinquish the land. Drafting a joint letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda, they had Śyāmasundara hand-deliver it to him in Vṛndāvana.

Sitting in his room at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, Śrīla Prabhupāda read the letter from Bombay and then set it aside. He walked out into the open courtyard. In the last light of day many birds were chirping, and the devotees sat on the ground on a dhurrie, waiting. Prabhupāda sat on the simple raised seat and began singing Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava.

He had Pradyumna read, stopping him to explain a point whenever he felt inclined. He spoke of the special benefits of residing in Vṛndāvana, but warned that one should not come to the dhāma to do business or to commit any offenses. If, however, a Vṛndāvana resident did commit an offense, he could still receive the special benefits—provided he remained “sticking to the dust of Vṛndāvana.”

Night fell, and in the dark courtyard Prabhupāda continued lecturing beneath the dim electric bulbs. Visiting pilgrims came and went, watching “the Swamiji” lecturing in English to his Western disciples.

After the question-and-answer period, Prabhupāda walked back to his room, exchanging words along the way with Gaurachand Goswami, the temple proprietor. Some devotees lingered in Prabhupāda's room, and many Indians peered through the barred windows, although they had never cared to look years ago, before the room's permanent resident, Bhaktivedanta Swami, had gone to America.

When Prabhupāda was finally alone, he began to think of Bombay. Although hundreds of miles away, the occurrences there were beating on his heart here in Vṛndāvana. He took out his copy of the agreement he had signed with Mr. N. Then he called his secretary and began dictating a letter to his leaders in Bombay.

He began his letter like a lawyer, answering logically, point by point. One reason his disciples had given for wanting to give up the land was that the charity commissioner had refused them permission. In that case, Prabhupāda reasoned, they should try to get back the money and give up the land. But it appeared that the charity commissioner's permission was delayed, not denied—a small matter. Although Mr. N. had mentioned a six-month time limit for obtaining the charity commissioner's approval, Prabhupāda pointed out that the original agreement mentioned no such time limit.

Another reason Prabhupāda's men had given for wanting to relinquish the land was that, according to Mr. N., they had failed to obtain the conveyance within six months, as per the original sales agreement. Prabhupāda replied that, according to the clause in question, “it is our option to rescind the contract within six months, not the vendor's.” But the real point was that Mr. N. had accepted checks worth one lakh rupees as down payment within the six-month period, and therefore the sales agreement was completed.

... we consider that he has completed the conveyance and we do not want to rescind but we shall close the deal immediately, finished, that's all. He's trying to avoid this issue by tricks, and he has dominated you and you are little afraid of him, and he has fooled you to think he is in superior legal position so that you will give him some money. But this is cheating. We shall not give him any more money. Don't pay him any more. First of all bring a criminal case against him... So why you should be disappointed and afraid of him? Our position is very, very strong.

If Mr. N. was threatening violence, that also was not grounds for quitting the land. The devotees were on the land legally and should seek police protection.

Therefore I say that you boys cannot deal very well in these matters, because you are too timid. Now whatever you like you may do. Immediately criminal case should be taken, that you are not doing because he is bluffing you. He says big words and makes threats and you believe him foolishly and do like he says. That I shall not do.

Prabhupāda's conclusive advice was that the devotees go to the magistrate and tell him, "We gave Mr. N. money, and now he is threatening violence to drive us away." They should not be afraid.

Prabhupāda had not come to Vṛndāvana only to lecture; he wanted to begin construction on his new property. And the news from Bombay didn't distract him from his purpose. Every day he would have the devotees hold a saṅkīrtana procession from the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple to the property at Ramaṇa-reti. He would also go out occasionally to see the site, still nothing more than grass huts, a wire fence, and a small stock of building materials. Subala, the disciple in charge of construction, was slow and reluctant, and Prabhupāda sent for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami to come from Bombay and take charge.

Early one morning Subala left the land at Ramaṇa-reti, where he had been staying, and approached Śrīla Prabhupāda on the roof of the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. "Prabhupāda," he said, "I am having so much difficulty. I don't have time to read, I can't chant my rounds properly, I can't think of Kṛṣṇa. I'm always thinking of how this contractor is cheating us, or I'm thinking of signing checks for labor and materials. It's just too much. All these things on my mind are stopping me from thinking of Kṛṣṇa."

"Do you think Arjuna was simply meditating on Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra?" Prabhupāda replied. "Do you think Arjuna was sitting in yogic trance, while on the battlefield Kṛṣṇa worked? No, he was fighting. He was killing for Kṛṣṇa. He was thinking of all the soldiers he had to kill for Kṛṣṇa."

"Thinking of the checkbook, thinking of the men, thinking of the contractors—this is also like Arjuna's thinking. This is Kṛṣṇa's service. You should not worry about thinking of Kṛṣṇa directly. Arjuna wasn't sitting before Kṛṣṇa in a trance, meditating on His form. He was engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. Similarly this is Kṛṣṇa's service, and you should engage. Your life is full of Kṛṣṇa's service, and that is very good."

Subala was still unsatisfied. He complained to Prabhupāda that the other devotees wouldn't cooperate with him. He wanted to go into seclusion in Vṛndāvana for the rest of his life and chant, instead of becoming a full-time preacher in ISKCON.

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked, "What do you mean, no one will listen to you? You think that means they are defective? No, you are defective." Prabhupāda raised his voice. "If you are preaching and no one will listen, don't think you should go away in disgust and save yourself by chanting. No, that is not our line. We must qualify ourselves so they will listen. Do you know the story of Mr. Beecham?"

Subala shook his head.

"No one would buy his medicine," Prabhupāda continued, "so he became anxious. Still he tried, and one day a man approached him in his shop and asked if he had any Beecham's Powder, and in excitement that someone had asked for his medicine, he died. Similarly, better we spend our whole life and die just to make one person Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is our line, to become so absorbed in preaching Kṛṣṇa, whether in Vṛndāvana or anywhere. We must save all these asuras from destroying the world."

In stressing active service and practical results, Śrīla Prabhupāda was exactly following the teaching and example of his spiritual master. According to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, to chant in a secluded place and not preach was “a cheating process.” Devotional service meant practical work for Kṛṣṇa. The simple, positive way to control the senses was to engage them fully in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Active service was the topmost yoga, Prabhupāda told Subala, a fact that he had repeatedly explained in his books. In the recently published Second Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, he had written,

Here it is clearly mentioned that the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana were extensively busy in the hard labor of their day's work, and due to the day's hard labor they were engaged in sound sleep at night. So practically they had very little time to devote to meditation or to the other paraphernalia of spiritual activities. But factually they were engaged in the highest spiritual activities only. Everything done by them was spiritualized because everything was dovetailed in their relationship with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The central point of activities was Kṛṣṇa, and as such the so-called activities in the material world were saturated with spiritual potency. That is the advantage of the way of bhakti-yoga. One should discharge one's duty on Lord Kṛṣṇa's behalf, and all one's actions will be saturated with Kṛṣṇa thought, the highest pattern of trance in spiritual realization.

As far as possible, Prabhupāda engaged each disciple in a certain service according to the particular disciple's psychophysical nature. But everyone had to take up some kind of work for Kṛṣṇa. Since Prabhupāda desired to build a temple in Vṛndāvana, then whoever would help him do it, whether they were trained or not, or whether it was their tendency or not—whoever offered him assistance—would become very dear to him and to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

When a householder couple, Guru dāsa and Yamunā, agreed to remain in Vṛndāvana to help Prabhupāda build the temple, Prabhupāda welcomed it and shared with them the intention of his plan.

If you can construct a nice temple in Vrndavana for me in this way, I shall be eternally grateful. Because we are a worldwide movement of Krishna, and if we do not have a nice place at Vrndavana, then what will be the use? Vrndavana is Krishna's land, and in the future many of our disciples will go there just to see, along with many tourists and other friends, so therefore we must have sufficient place for them... I know that you are not trained up for being construction manager, neither that job must be very tasteful to you, but because you are sincere devotee of Krishna, He is giving you all strength and intelligence how to do it. That is what we want; that is advancement in Krishna consciousness.

By the time Prabhupāda and most of his disciples left Vṛndāvana at the end of Kārttika, relations between his disciples and the residents of Vṛndāvana had improved. The people of Vṛndāvana were impressed by the devotees' daily sankīrtana procession to Ramaṇa-reti, and they were impressed by Prabhupāda. Although Prabhupāda felt that much time had been wasted—it had been a year since Mr. S. had offered them the land—he was now hopeful.

ISKCON projects were developing all over the world, and all were struggling. The devotees' only means of income was from the sale of books and, to some degree, from their Spiritual Sky incense

business. As yet Prabhupāda had no architectural plan for his Vṛndāvana project, but he determined to gather from his Book Fund and from devotees enough money for materials and labor. One day he went to the building site and asked a devotee to mix a little cement, and with his own hand, he laid down the first concrete for the foundation.

* * *

Hyderabad

November 11, 1972

Prabhupāda had come to Hyderabad for a paṇḍāl program. Big crowds attended his lectures, and wherever he went, even while getting into and out of his car, people surrounded him to touch his lotus feet. Although Hyderabad had been suffering from drought, a few days after Prabhupāda's arrival rains came. One newspaper suggested that the harināma-kīrtana Śrīla Prabhupāda and his devotees performed so enthusiastically must have ended the drought. Prabhupāda agreed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda met with Mr. N., who was visiting Hyderabad from Bombay. Śyāmasundara still had a cordial relationship with Mr. N., because Mr. N. had been fond of his three-year-old daughter, Sarasvatī. So he went to Mr. N. and convinced him to speak to Prabhupāda. Mr. N. agreed, but being suspicious that Prabhupāda might try to use mystic power to persuade him to do something against his will, he brought a guru with him, thinking the guru would counteract Prabhupāda's spiritual power.

Mr. N., his guru, and Śyāmasundara all came to the home of Panilal Prithi, where Prabhupāda was staying. Prabhupāda met informally with his guests, conversing with them over prasādam, until he yawned, and Mr. N.'s guru said, "Oh, Swami, you must be very tired. We should not disturb you now. You should rest, and we may talk later."

"Oh, yes," Prabhupāda replied, "I am very tired."

So Mr. N. and his guru excused themselves and retired to the adjoining room.

After a few minutes Prabhupāda called Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami into his room. "When someone asks you if you are tired," Prabhupāda said, "it means he is tired. If you go into the other room, you will see that they are sleeping." He instructed Tamāla Kṛṣṇa to carefully awaken Mr. N. without disturbing his guru and bring him in.

Tiptoeing into the room, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa found both Mr. N. and his guru asleep on the beds. He went over to Mr. N., touched his arm, and said quietly, "Mr. N., Mr. N., wake up. Prabhupāda would like to speak with you. Come quickly." Mr. N., being roused from his slumber, obediently walked into Prabhupāda's room, forgetting his guru friend.

For two hours Prabhupāda talked with Mr. N., and by the end of the discussion they had worked out a new sales agreement. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Śyāmasundara, working in a separate room, drafted

and typed the documents, while Prabhupāda and Mr. N. settled the final legal points. Then Mr. N. signed the agreement, while his guru friend continued sleeping soundly.

Later that day Tamāla Kṛṣṇa confided to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "I am so disturbed by these dealings that I can't chant my rounds properly."

"That is natural," Prabhupāda replied. "Sometimes when I am disturbed, I also."

"But I can see that I am making spiritual advancement, even so," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa admitted.

Prabhupāda nodded.

"I used to think how to avoid difficult situations," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said. "But now I think I should not run away from them."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "we should welcome these. They give us an opportunity to advance more."

Śyāmasundara and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami flew back to Bombay with Mr. N. that afternoon. According to the new terms, ISKCON would pay Mr. N. the five lakhs of rupees for the government tax, and in return Mr. N. would execute the deed. But there was also a new time limit—three weeks—and the devotees would have to work fast. Prabhupāda himself would soon come to Bombay to settle the matter once and for all.

* * *

Bombay

November 25, 1972

Although Prabhupāda had come to Bombay with hopes of finishing the land transaction, Mr. N. was still delaying, despite the new agreement. Obviously his stalling was simply part of his plan to cheat ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda waited many days in Bombay, finally departing for a paṇḍāl program in Ahmedabad. He left behind instructions for his disciples to get the deed on the new terms or else to take back the original two lakhs of rupees paid as the down payment.

While Śrīla Prabhupāda was away, however, Śyāmasundara, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, and the others began talking about how even if they could one day get the deed to the Juhu property, to develop Hare Krishna Land the way Prabhupāda had envisioned would be practically impossible. Śyāmasundara argued that even if they got the land, how could they really expect to build a big temple and hotel out here in the jungle? It just wouldn't work. Meanwhile, from Ahmedabad Prabhupāda continued to wage his Bombay campaign, and he requested Mr. N. and Mr. D. to come to Ahmedabad to try and make a settlement. They declined.

In Bombay the devotees learned that if they wanted to get back their down payment as well as the money they had deposited toward the fivelakh gains tax, then they would have to cancel the new agreement. They were confused, and their time was running out.

One morning one of Prabhupāda's disciples, Viśakhā-devī dāsī, arrived in Ahmedabad from Bombay. Prabhupāda called for her and told her to return to Bombay immediately with a message. Out of concern that his leaders in Bombay not make a wrong decision and decide to relinquish the land, he told her to tell them that they should not under any circumstances cancel the agreement with Mr. N. "Actually," he said, "this is not a woman's job, but everyone else here is either engaged in the paṇḍāl or has not been with us long enough to do this task."

Viśakhā took the next train out of Ahmedabad and arrived in Bombay the following morning. But what Prabhupāda had foreseen had already happened: the devotees had canceled the sales agreement. They were convinced that to get the land would be a mistake, and their lawyers had agreed, pointing out that if the devotees wanted to retrieve their money, they should cancel the agreement immediately. When the devotees heard Prabhupāda's message from Ahmedabad, confusion reigned. They now had no legal standing, no claim to the land. And they had failed to carry out Prabhupāda's desire! Girirāja phoned Prabhupāda in Ahmedabad to tell him what had happened.

"Bhaktivedanta Swami here," Prabhupāda said as he took the telephone. Girirāja was saying that a devotee had come from Ahmedabad with a message. "Yes, yes," Prabhupāda said, "what is the point?" Finally Girirāja blurted out that they had canceled the sales agreement. Prabhupāda was silent. Then in a voice that expressed both anger and resignation, he said, "Then everything is finished."

"I shall be the last man to give up the Hare Krishna Land to the rogue Mr. N.," Prabhupāda wrote to a life member just before leaving Ahmedabad for Bombay. Prabhupāda was now immediately planning how to rectify his disciples' mistake. No money had yet been transferred, so perhaps it was not too late.

Mr. N. could not possibly understand why Prabhupāda was so determined in his fight to keep the Juhu land. Not that Prabhupāda had kept his motives hidden, but only a devotee can understand the mind or actions of another devotee. Mr. N. was dealing with Prabhupāda just as he had dealt with C. Company. He had cheated them, and now he would cheat ISKCON. He could only surmise that Prabhupāda and his disciples were driven by the same motive as he himself, the only motive he could understand: material possessiveness.

Actually, even Prabhupāda's disciples were having difficulty understanding Prabhupāda's unbreakable determination. Prabhupāda's main motive was to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Bombay. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "My Guru Mahārāja ordered me to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West, and I have done that. Now I want to preach in India." Bombay was the most important city in India—the gateway. And within Bombay, Kṛṣṇa had somehow led Prabhupāda to this land, where he had begun preaching and had brought the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In Prabhupāda's eyes, the land was suitable for the large, gorgeous temple and international hotel he had planned.

Bombay was an important city and required grand temple worship, large festivals, mass prasādam distribution, and a variety of Vedic cultural programs. The Juhu land seemed ideal for a school, a theater, a library, apartments—a Hare Kṛṣṇa city. So how could Prabhupāda retreat from this rogue

who was trying to cheat him? There would always be persons opposed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda said, but that did not mean the devotees should give in. A preacher had to be tolerant, and sometimes, when all else failed and Kṛṣṇa's interest was at stake, he had to fight.

Another reason Prabhupāda refused to give up this particular plot of land was that he had promised the Deities, Rādhā-Rāsavihārī. He had invited Kṛṣṇa here and prayed, "Dear Sir, please stay here, and I will build You a beautiful temple." When Prabhupāda had been touring and a devotee from Bombay had written him that the Deities were being neglected, Prabhupāda had written back insisting that these "abominable activities" be rectified. The Deity of Kṛṣṇa was not a stone statue but was actually Kṛṣṇa, eager to reciprocate with His sincere devotee.

So if using the land for missionary work was the obvious or external reason for Prabhupāda's determination to keep his Hare Krishna Land, then the internal reason was his personal commitment to Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsavihārī. Certainly Mr. N. and his associates could never understand this. Even Prabhupāda's own disciples could not realize it fully. Prabhupāda had brought Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa into very poor conditions, but with the promise of something wonderful to come. At his request Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had come, and They were standing patiently, giving eternal benediction to Their worshipers, while Prabhupāda struggled to fulfill his promise.

Five hundred years ago each of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana had had his own Deity, for whom he had built a beautiful temple. But Prabhupāda was empowered to install and maintain many Deities. In his Western world headquarters were the opulent Rukmiṇī-Dvārakādhīśa, in New York Rādhā-Govinda, in Dallas big Rādhā-Kālacandajī, on a traveling bus in America with Kīrtanānanda Swami and Viṣṇujana Swami were Rādhā-Dāmodara, in London Rādhā-Londonīśvara, in Māyāpur Rādhā-Mādhava, and in Australia Rādhā-Gopīnātha. All were Prabhupāda's worshipable Deities, arcā-vigraha incarnations of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa appearing at the request of Their pure devotee for the benefit of neophyte devotees in various places around the world.

To establish many Deities was one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's prime contributions as a world preacher. And when he would visit each temple, he would always stand reverently before the Deities, taking Their blessings, and then he would offer prostrated obeisances. "Be humble," he would instruct the devotees. "Always remember you are dealing with Kṛṣṇa." And sometimes he would be unable to suppress his ecstatic symptoms of love for the Deities. Through his representatives, his many disciples, he worshiped all these Deities, but in the case of Rādhā-Rāsavihārī his involvement was more direct. Having taken India as his own managerial duty, he considered caring for this Deity his specific responsibility.

Prabhupāda's fighting spirit to keep the land was so keen that he sometimes appeared to be fighting for fighting's sake. He sometimes even compared Mr. N. to the demon Kāṁsa in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, who had repeatedly tried to kill Kṛṣṇa. Just as Kāṁsa had employed many minor demons in his attempts to kill Kṛṣṇa, so Mr. N. had employed demoniac agents like lawyers, friends, and hoodlums. Kṛṣṇa's killing of demons like Kāṁsa was His pastime, or līlā—He enjoyed it. And Prabhupāda, as the servant of Kṛṣṇa, was fully absorbed in this fighting. He was vigilant, militant. When Mr. N. bluffed or frightened the devotees, causing them to back down, Prabhupāda held his ground. He took naturally to the fight; Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's mission were being challenged.

Never before had Prabhupāda been so threatened or met such active enemies. In New Delhi, when he had been selling his Back to Godhead magazines, he had often met with brusque words, and in America people had ignored him and occasionally heckled him. But no one had seriously attempted to stop his preaching. Here, however, was a demon working actively to cheat him, to destroy his preaching, to disperse his disciples, and to displace his deity. He was forced to fight, and his disciples, if they were to understand his mood, would also have to fight.

Prabhupāda was acting as the protector and the parent of the Deities and of ISKCON Bombay. As he had described in *The Nectar of Devotion*, many great devotees have an eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa as His protector. When as a child Kṛṣṇa had fought the serpent Kāliya, Kṛṣṇa's mother and father had been plunged into transcendental anxiety. They had seen their child entangled in the coils of the serpent and, fearing for Kṛṣṇa's life, had wanted to protect Him. The eternal mother and father of Kṛṣṇa always worry that Kṛṣṇa may meet with harm, and when danger appears to come, their natural anxiety increases many times. In this way they show the most intense love for Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda's mood was to protect Rādhā-Rāsavihārī and also his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Although he knew that Kṛṣṇa was the supreme protector and that nobody could oppose His will, out of a protective desire to spread Kṛṣṇa's glories he feared that the demon Mr. N. might harm Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda's feelings of anxiety and protectiveness extended to his disciples also. Although out of duty he often criticized and corrected them privately, before others he usually defended and praised them. When Dr. Patel, a Bombay physician, had criticized the way the devotees were living, not protecting themselves from mosquitoes, Prabhupāda had said that because his devotees were liberated and did not identify with their bodies, such things did not trouble them.

Prabhupāda saw his disciples as children, with little worldly experience; they did not know how to deal with rogues and could be easily tricked. But if the son was gullible, the father would have to be shrewd and strong to protect his family. As protector of the devotees and of Kṛṣṇa's mission, Prabhupāda wanted to establish good housing so that his disciples could serve Kṛṣṇa in comfort—even elegance. Prabhupāda's spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, had taught the same thing when he said that preachers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness should have the best of everything, because they were doing the best service to Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda was therefore determined to establish his Hare Kṛṣṇa city in Bombay. He did not take the attitude of a naked mendicant, who cares for nothing of this material world. He felt responsible for his thousands of disciples, and therefore he took on so many anxieties.

Mr. N. could not know what motives were driving Śrīla Prabhupāda. Nor could he imagine the full ramifications of opposing Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee, even though the danger of such a position had been explained in India's most famous classics, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and *Rāmāyaṇa*. Prabhupāda was fighting on the side of Kṛṣṇa; therefore, Mr. N. was opposing the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

By Prabhupāda's disciples' cancellation of the agreement, ISKCON's legal position had been weakened. But Prabhupāda had faith that if the devotees just maintained possession of the land, their position would remain strong. At the same time, he urged the devotees to preach more. They should not think that without a temple they could not preach, so he arranged for another big

Bombay paṇḍāl festival downtown, which proved to be a great success, with twenty thousand attending nightly.

Important guests like Mr. R. K. Ganatra, the mayor of Bombay, made introductory speeches, and the devotees also took an active part, organizing, advertising, cooking and distributing prasādam, distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, and preaching at a question-and-answer booth. The paṇḍāl festival served to lift the devotees out of the doldrums of their protracted legal fight and the austerity of their living at Juhu.

During the last week of January 1973, Prabhupāda met with Mr. N. at the residence of Mr. Mahadevia. Although Prabhupāda's lawyers had filed a criminal case against Mr. N., Prabhupāda wanted to attempt an out-of-court settlement. He had always been gracious and charming with Mr. N., and Mr. N. had always appeared responsive and polite. But this time was different. Gone were the smiles and friendly words. The two were remaining barely civil to each other. After a few minutes, Prabhupāda asked his disciples to leave the room.

Speaking in Hindi, Mr. N. began accusing Prabhupāda and the devotees of being connected with the CIA. "I will come on Monday," said Mr. N. tersely, "with a check for two lakhs to pay back your down payment."

"All right," Prabhupāda replied. "If you don't want to part with your land, then we will leave. But think before you do this."

Mr. N. continued his accusations. "You people are calling yourselves the owners of the land, but you are just a big disturbance to the whole area, getting up at four and all this..."

"We do not claim to be the owner," Prabhupāda replied. "Kṛṣṇa is the real owner. I am not the real owner. Kṛṣṇa is already there on His land. Why are you bothering us so much? Simply take the money and give us the land. Or, if you want us to vacate, then prepare the check." Prabhupāda had been speaking with restraint, but now his tone became angry. "Bring out your check, and we will vacate tomorrow morning. No, we will vacate tonight! Give us our money back. Have you the money?"

Mr. N. shouted, "I will remove the Deities myself! I will break the temple and remove the Deities!" Mr. N. then stormed out of the room.

That week Mr. N. was hospitalized after a severe heart attack. Two weeks later he died. When Prabhupāda heard of Mr. N.'s death, he was at first silent. Then he quoted a verse Prahāda Mahārāja had spoken following the death of his demoniac father, Hiranyakaśipu: *modeta sādhuḥ api vṛścika-sarpa-hatyā*. "Even a saint is pleased when a snake or scorpion is killed."

Mrs. N., although not as legally astute as her late husband, carried on the fight, and her lawyers, eager to collect their fees, pursued even more intently than she the litigation to drive out ISKCON. In April 1973, at ISKCON's instigation, ISKCON's case came before the High Court. There were tactical delays, however, and month after month passed with no decision.

Prabhupāda did not commit himself to construction on the land, because he had no deed and no assurance of one. He toured the West, returned to India, but still nothing had happened to resolve the matter. Life in ISKCON Bombay was peaceful, but progress remained stunted, the outcome uncertain.

Then one day, without warning, Mrs. N. launched a violent attack. On the morning of June 1, while the devotees were attending their routine duties, a truck drove onto the Juhu property. A demolition squad had come to dismantle the temple. Somehow Mrs. N. had convinced an official in the city government to authorize demolition of the temple, a modest structure of brick and steel-reinforced concrete. When Girirāja attempted to show the officer in charge a letter establishing ISKCON's rights, the man ignored the letter and signaled for the demolition to begin. Soon more trucks arrived, until nearly one hundred demolitionists, working with blowtorches and sledgehammers, swarmed over the property.

The demolitionists mounted ladders and began breaking the roof of the temple hall with sledgehammers. Others used torches to cut through the steel supports. The plan of the demolition squad was to knock out the steel supports of the kīrtana hall and proceed methodically toward the Deity house, wherein Rādhā-Rāsavihārī stood. The devotees tried to stop the demolition, but policemen soon appeared on the scene and, working in pairs, would grab the dissenters by the legs and arms and carry them away. Police dragged the women away by the hair, while tenants on the land looked on. Some were glad to see the demolition, although others were sympathetic. Out of fear of the police, however, no one moved to help the devotees.

One devotee, Maniṣvi, ran to a telephone and called Mr. Mahadevia, who, along with his friend Mr. Vinoda Gupta, rushed to Hare Krishna Land, to find the police dragging off the last protesting devotee by the hair. She had been trying to close the doors to the altar to protect the Deities when three policemen had wrestled her away. Mr. Mahadevia rushed to the house of a sympathetic tenant, Mr. Acarya, and phoned his brother Chandra Mahadevia, a wealthy businessman and friend of Bal Ṭhākura, the leader of one of the most influential political parties in Bombay.

Mr. Chandra Mahadevia informed Bal Ṭhākura of the emergency: at the instigation of a Hindu and under the order of a Hindu municipal officer, a Hindu temple of Lord Viṣṇu was being demolished. Mr. Ṭhākura in turn informed the municipal commissioner, who denied knowing of any order to demolish the temple and who in turn phoned the local ward office that had sent out the demolition squad. The ward office sent a man to stop the demolition. The officer arrived around two P.M., just as the demolition squad had cut through the last pillars and were dismantling the roof above the Deities. The order to stop the demolition was given to the ward officer in charge, who then stopped the demolition squad.

Prabhupāda was in Calcutta at the time of the attack, and when the devotees reached him by phone, he told them to organize the local ISKCON sympathizers and life members and protest the attack by mass publicity. They should also expose the persons responsible. This would be very effective against Mrs. N. and her party.

Prabhupāda mentioned various life members he thought would help. Mr. Sada Jiwatlal, the head of the Hindu Viswa Parishad, should help with publicity, since his organization was a defender of

Hindu dharma and was meant for handling such cases as this. Mr. Sethi should help in preventing further violence. This episode, Prabhupāda said, had been part of Kṛṣṇa's plan; the devotees should not be afraid.

The next morning a photo of the demolished temple appeared on the front page of the Free Press Journal with the headline, "UNAUTHORIZED TEMPLE DEMOLISHED BY MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES."

Devotees began counteracting the bad publicity. Mr. Sada Jiwatlal turned his downtown office into an ISKCON office, and he and the devotees began the campaign. Despite the unfavorable propaganda, many Indians were shocked at the violence, and the municipal corporation unanimously condemned those officials responsible for the attack on a Hindu temple. Devotees, working from six A.M. to nine P.M. at Sada Jiwatlal's office, phoned the newspapers, wrote letters and circulars, and contacted possible sympathizers.

Mr. Vinoda Gupta, a member of the Jan-Sangh political party, which favored maintaining India's Hindu culture, joined with Kartikeya Mahadevia and others to form a "Save the Temple" committee. Mr. Gupta published his own leaflet declaring ISKCON to be a bona fide Hindu organization. As Girirāja met with and elicited the support of government officials, many of Bombay's leading citizens, appreciating the authenticity of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, began to show sympathy and offer assistance.

Thus the plan of Mrs. N. and her lawyers backfired. Although they had been thinking they were dealing with only a mere handful of young foreigners, they soon found themselves facing many of Bombay's most influential citizens.

Śrīla Prabhupāda predicted that the results would be positive. A few days after the incident he wrote,

The demolition of our temple by the municipality has strengthened our position. The municipality standing committee has condemned the hasty action of the municipality, and has agreed to reconstruct the shed at their cost. Not only that, the temporary construction shall continue to stay until the court decision is there as to who is the proprietor of the land. Under the circumstances we should immediately reconstruct the Deity shed. Barbed wire fencing should be immediately done to cover the naked land. And if possible, immediately in front of the Deity shed, a temporary pandal should be constructed, with our materials. If it is so done, then I can go to Bombay and begin Bhagawat Parayana, to continue until the court decision is there. This is my desire.

Prabhupāda also asked Girirāja to give full coverage of the temple demolition in his Hare Krishna Monthly journal to life members. Prabhupāda himself wrote an article for the Monthly describing his movement and the events leading to the attack on the temple. He condemned the Bombay municipality for having the "audacity to smash our temple, against the law and principle of religious faith." A clique in Bombay, he said, had conspired to drive the devotees from their land without returning their money, and he asked for sympathizers and life members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to come forward and help him at this difficult hour.

Only about a dozen ISKCON life members responded to Śrīla Prabhupāda's call. There were hundreds of life members in Bombay, each of whom had donated 1,111 rupees and were receiving Prabhupāda's books. But when it came to a personal commitment in a time of controversy, only a few were willing to help. Those who did help, however, were able to assist in ways that the innocent, naive, and uninfluential disciples of Prabhupāda could not.

The devotees began to see the entire course of events as Kṛṣṇa's mercy, since many life members were now rendering valuable service to Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the past Prabhupāda had stayed in the homes of many life members, preaching to them and their families, convincing them of his sincerity and of the noble aims of his movement. These friends and members—like Bhagubai Patel, Beharilal Khandelwala, Brijratan Mohatta, Dr. C. Bali, and others—were acting not simply out of Hindu sentiment but out of deep respect and affection for Prabhupāda.

Girirāja, working with Sada Jiwatlal, tried to convince the municipal council to authorize the rebuilding of the temple structure. While doing so, however, he discovered that Mrs. N. had that very day (a Friday) filed for a court injunction preventing ISKCON from rebuilding. Justice Nain told Girirāja that he did not want to grant Mrs. N.'s request and that he would hear the devotee's case on the following Monday. This meant that the devotees had from Saturday morning to Monday morning, two days, to rebuild the temple.

The devotees reasoned that, although they had no actual permission to rebuild the temple, there was as yet no law to stop them. If Justice Nain ruled against them, then to rebuild would be very difficult. They decided, therefore, to use the weekend to rebuild. Mr. Lal, a former contractor, helped arrange materials: bricks, mortar, asbestos sheets. Mr. Sethi offered a crew of laborers. At eight P.M. on Friday the masons began their work, continuing throughout the night despite the rain. And on Monday morning, when the judge learned of the new temple, he declared, "What is built is built. No one can destroy the temple."

When Prabhupāda heard the news, he considered it a complete victory. The temple had been rebuilt, and public opinion was swinging strongly in ISKCON's favor.

SPL 42: Developing Māyāpur

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Developing Māyāpur

= Māyāpur

June 1, 1973

Although the Māyāpur building was not yet completed, Prabhupāda had come there to reside. He took two adjoining rooms, one as his study and one as his bedroom, on the second floor. Meanwhile, construction work continued in the temple room and in other parts of the building. On Prabhupāda's first day there, a storm struck, with massive black clouds and high winds. The storm was brief, however, and damage was minimal.

I have just now come to Mayapur and am very hopeful to regain my strength and health on account of being in this transcendental atmosphere. Every moment we are passing here in great delight.

In the evening the temple pūjārī, Jananivāsa, would come to Prabhupāda's room with a clay pot of red coals and frankincense and fan the frankincense until the room was filled with smoke. This was to drive out insects, but Prabhupāda also considered it purifying.

Although he was sometimes disturbed by the workers' hammering, he found the atmosphere otherwise peaceful. Only a few devotees were staying there, and Prabhupāda gave his attention to translating or to speaking with guests and to the devotees in charge of developing his Māyāpur center. He would express his desires especially to Bhavānanda Mahārāja and Jayapatāka Mahārāja and worked his will through them.

The devotees living in the building with Prabhupāda considered themselves menial servants in Prabhupāda's personal house. Of course, all the buildings in ISKCON belonged to Prabhupāda, yet in Māyāpur that sense was intensified. Generally the devotees in each particular center would raise money to support their center, but Prabhupāda personally took charge of getting funds for Māyāpur. He had begun a Māyāpur-Vṛndāvana Trust Fund of donations from his disciples and interest from bonds and security deposits. If money was misspent, energy misused, or the building damaged in any way, Prabhupāda would become very concerned. Now that he was personally on the scene, he often walked about, giving detailed instructions and demanding that discrepancies be corrected. The pink and reddish building was like a huge transcendental ship, and Śrīla Prabhupāda, as captain, would walk the wide verandas, giving strict orders to all mates for keeping everything shipshape.

One day Prabhupāda was walking on the veranda near his room. The other rooms were locked, and as Prabhupāda walked alone, he would open the window shutters and look in. Suddenly he turned to Śatadhanya, who waited on call nearby. "The fan is going on inside, and this room is empty and locked," Prabhupāda said. "Who has done this?" Śatadhanya didn't know. "Whoever has done this," Prabhupāda said, "is a rascal! He should know he is a rascal!" For two days after, Prabhupāda continued to refer to the incident with disgust.

One day, after a huge wind and rain storm, water covered the twelve-foot-wide marble veranda outside Prabhupāda's room. Bhavānanda Goswami, taking a large squeegee a devotee had made, began cleaning the marble floor, and Śrīla Prabhupāda came to his door to watch. "This is the way to clean marble," Prabhupāda said. "Don't polish it with wax, but just keep plenty of fresh water and every day in the morning wipe it off. In this way the marble will become naturally polished and will shine like glass."

Prabhupāda felt affection and deep gratitude for those devotees dedicating their lives to the Māyāpur project. One night he called Bhavānanda to his room and began asking him about the devotees. Suddenly Prabhupāda began crying. "I know it is difficult for all you Western boys and girls," he said. "You are so dedicated, serving here in my mission. I know you cannot even get prasādam. When I think that you cannot even get milk and that you have given up your opulent life to come here and you do not complain, I am very much indebted to all of you."

Bhavānanda: The marble workers lived in some chāṭāi houses right near the construction site. There was a hand pump just outside the building, and that's where we took our bath and where the workers got the water for the cement. Some distance off were two toilets—one for the men, one for the women. It was just two holes in the ground, and each hole surrounded by a chāṭāi wall. The storms and the rain would come, and we would have to sludge through the mud in the fields to go to the toilets. There were snakes all over the place. It was wild! It was a construction site. No one lives on a construction site, but we did. Śrīla Prabhupāda made us move in there. It was good for us. No bathrooms, nothing—just open floors with concrete.

Although the devotees endured the austerities of living at the Māyāpur center construction site, they sometimes felt it was too difficult. But Śrīla Prabhupāda never considered it difficult, and he would encourage the devotees: "Māyāpur is so wonderful. You can live on the air and water alone."

Bhavānanda: We were able to face up to so many difficulties because we just took it as our order from Śrīla Prabhupāda. There was no conception of ever leaving. What else would I do? This was my order: "Take Māyāpur. I am giving you Māyāpur. Take it, develop it, and enjoy it." There was no question in our minds of going somewhere else.

The surrounding grounds were rice fields, and to get to the temple building from the entrance of the property—a distance of more than two hundred yards—devotees would have to walk on paths made by ridges of earth that separated one rice field from another. The kitchen, which was made of tarpaulin and bamboo, was located near the entrance to the property.

The devotees had to live without electricity much of the time, since the power supply was often cut off. They would use kerosene lamps at night, and Prabhupāda said the lamps should be taken apart every day, the wicks trimmed, and the glass washed. "In the future," he said, "you should grow castor plants and crush the seeds and take the oil for burning."

Prabhupāda told the devotees how to build simple dwellings. He also wanted them to build a wall with a gate along the front of the property. They should build small rooms—hutments, he called them—against the wall. Devotees could stay in these simple cottages. They should plant coconut and banana trees.

Raising the money, buying the land, arranging for workers and materials—it had been an arduous struggle, replete with bureaucratic delays, forms, fees, supply shortages, and the like. Prabhupāda would not tolerate any carelessness or waste. The building, which was turning out to be so artistic, substantial, and useful, was actually a gift from Lord Kṛṣṇa. So to live here in Kṛṣṇa's building was to reciprocate lovingly with the Lord. The devotees should think of serving Kṛṣṇa, not of becoming comfortable and forgetting the purpose of both the building and of life. The slamming of doors, although seemingly a minor fault, greatly disturbed Śrīla Prabhupāda. It symptomized carelessness and misuse, and Prabhupāda said the sound cracked his heart. One time Prabhupāda came out of his room and called out, "Who is that slamming the doors? No one knows from where this building has come. You take it for granted, that it is here. But no one cares."

More often, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda displayed a roselike softness, an intimate, informal, and affectionate nature. The holy dhāma of Māyāpur was the spiritual world, Goloka Vṛndāvana; so the devotees there were living with Prabhupāda in the spiritual world. More than most any other place in the world, the devotees living in Māyāpur knew they could walk into Prabhupāda's room and see him. He sometimes even walked into their rooms. While they were working, reading, or talking, he might suddenly walk in and speak with them, asking how they felt and how they were adjusting to living in India. "It is difficult living here?" he would ask. "I think India is too hot. What do you think?"

Even with the building incomplete, many guests were coming, especially to talk with Prabhupāda, who patiently spent many hours each day speaking about Kṛṣṇa consciousness with guests who came to inquire about his movement or who came only to talk about themselves and their own philosophy. Sometimes he would remark that an individual had wasted his time, but he never stopped anyone from seeing him. One wealthy Hindu man, Mr. Brijratan Mohatta, and his wife, a daughter of multimillionaire R. D. Birla, visited Prabhupāda from Calcutta. Śrīla Prabhupāda took care in properly hosting his guests, and he personally reviewed the menu and briefed his disciples on serving Mr. Mohatta and his wife. Offering prasādam was an important part of the Vaiṣṇava's etiquette, and Śrīla Prabhupāda always stressed that the devotees immediately offer prasādam to visitors.

"You should always be able to offer water, hot purīs and eggplant bhājī (fried eggplant), and sweets," Prabhupāda said. Even when guests appeared shy, Prabhupāda would insist they take a full meal. Mrs. Mohatta, even though a member of one of the wealthiest families in India, was satisfied with the simple hospitality Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples offered. The room she and her husband stayed in was unfinished—the slate floors hadn't been polished, and construction work was going on all around—and the devotees could only offer them a mattress on the floor with a pillow; yet they appeared to be quite satisfied and appreciative.

Bhavananda: Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced us to many of the details of Indian culture at Māyāpur. He had us put down mattresses covered with sheets in his room. In 1970, in Los Angeles, he had asked me to sew sheets together to make a covering for the rug in his room. And then he had gotten down on his hands and knees right next to me, and we had smoothed out the wrinkles in the sheet.

So he had us do that same thing in Māyāpur, where we put mattresses from one end of the room to the other with bolster pillows against the wall. "Now you have white sheet covers," he said, "and you change these every day." When Bengali gentlemen visited Śrīla Prabhupāda in his room, they would sit on these mattresses around the edge of the room, their backs against the bolster pillows.

It was very aristocratic. The whole mood was that he was the mahant, the master of the house, the ācārya, but also the aristocratic Bengali gentlemen saw that he was reestablishing the old aristocratic mood from the early 1900's or 1920's. It was from Prabhupāda's old days with the Mullik family and it was rapidly dwindling. At that time you couldn't find a semblance of the old culture anywhere, because all those families had become degraded, and their wealth gone.

When the evening's multitude of varieties of insects gathered around Prabhupāda's light, he would sometimes comment on how they were such wonderful creations of God. "This little insect," he said one evening, "is both pilot and flying machine in one. Here there are hundreds of insects flying together, and yet there are no collisions. That is God's arrangement. They never crash, because the Supersoul is present—one in every heart. Let the material scientists manufacture such a wonderful machine with a built-in pilot that will not crash. When one man flies and then there are two planes, they have to be very careful."

While a few devotees sat on the sheet-covered mattresses in his room, Prabhupāda sat on his slightly raised āsana, leaning back against a white bolster pillow. Both spiritual master and disciple enjoyed bliss in speaking and hearing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The devotees wanted to hear Prabhupāda's words and follow his will, and he wanted to instruct them.

"But these insects," Prabhupāda continued, "are not perfect. They are flying to the light. That also means they are attracted to death. So they are just like the materialists. The materialists are building skyscrapers, yet they don't know what will happen at death. Henry Ford and other big capitalists had to die. But so many others are trying to become just like them. They do not know it means their death also. They are like these small insects. In the morning we simply find heaps of them, all dead."

Often while Prabhupāda was talking in his room the lights would suddenly go out, and devotees would bring in kerosene lamps. And each night, while Prabhupāda was speaking, the pūjārī would come, filling the room with frankincense smoke. Ghee lamps faintly illuminated the large teakwood bas-relief carving of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on the wall opposite Prabhupāda's desk.

During this summer visit, Prabhupāda further revealed his vision for ISKCON's Māyāpur development. The devotees were already aware that the plan was vast and would cost millions of dollars. They now had one building, but this was only the beginning. In the total plan, this building was almost insignificant. Prabhupāda spoke about a colossal temple, its great dome rising above a transcendental city. This Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir would house the greatest planetarium in the world, depicting the universe as it is described in the Vedic literature.

To execute such a project, Prabhupāda wanted to train his disciples in the Vedic arts, now dying in Bengal. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been greatly interested in using dioramas to depict the līlā of Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya, and now Prabhupāda wanted his own disciples to learn the art by studying under local Māyāpur artists.

In June Baradrāja, Ādideva, Mūrti, and Īśāna arrived to begin learning the art of doll-making. Prabhupāda also wanted a disciple to learn to make mṛdaṅgas, and a potter began coming every day to teach Īśāna how to mold and fire the clay shells. The devotees converted Prabhupāda's original straw cottage into a workshop, and Prabhupāda began inviting other disciples to come to Māyāpur.

Mayapur is already wonderful, being the transcendental birthplace of Lord Krishna. By utilizing Western talents to develop this place, certainly it will become unique in the world.

The Māyāpur city, Prabhupāda said, would be the fulfillment of the desires of the previous ācāryas. The city would grow to a population of fifty thousand and would become the spiritual capital of the world. With its gigantic temple in the center and separate quarters for brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras, the city would be a model for all other cities. The day would come when the world's cities would be ruined, and humanity would take refuge in cities modeled after Māyāpur. The development of Māyāpur would mark the beginning of a Kṛṣṇa conscious world. Thus the influence of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu would increase, and His prediction would manifest: "In every town and village My name will be chanted."

Prabhupāda said that Māyāpur should eventually become more easily accessible—by bridge from Navadvīpa, by motor launch up the Ganges from Calcutta, and from all parts by air. In Bengal millions were by birth followers of Lord Caitanya, and they would recognize and take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the pure form of their own culture. There is a saying: What Bengal does, the rest of India follows. So if Bengal be came reformed and purified by the Kṛṣṇa conscious example of American Vaiṣṇavas, then all India would follow. And when all India became Kṛṣṇa conscious, the whole world would follow. "I have given you the kingdom of God," Prabhupāda said to his Māyāpur managers. "Now take it, develop it, and enjoy it."

Throughout the month of June Prabhupāda continued to live happily and peacefully in the not-yet-completed building of the Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir. Although he had been ill with a cough since Los Angeles—a cough he had been unable to cure while traveling in the West—on coming to Māyāpur his health had recovered.

In Mayapur I am much improved from how I was in Los Angeles. The great advantage here is that there is always open air and a good breeze which is naturally very good for any breathing difficulties... Certainly Mayapur is by far a better place than Los Angeles because you can enjoy the free air here. The climate is not too hot, but a little moist with humidity but on the whole it is very pleasing. Our building is most superexcellently situated, and it is the experience of many respectable outsiders that while the outer atmosphere is unbearably hot, in our building it is pleasing.

Prabhupāda praised the constant pleasurable breezes that passed through the building—he called them "Vaikuṇṭha breezes." Sometimes, however, a violent storm would suddenly appear. Although severe, these storms were also beautiful, with continuous lightning like neon lights filling the sky. One day a storm arose, and the winds began to howl through the building. Noticing that Prabhupāda's doors and windows were open, Śatadhanya rushed into the room and began frantically closing them. But Prabhupāda, seated at his desk, said, "Stop, leave all the windows open."

"Prabhupāda," Śatadhanya protested, "the storm is here."

"Just leave them open," Prabhupāda said, as the wind rushed through his room at more than fifty miles an hour. Prabhupāda smiled. "There is no place in the world like this!" he said, his saffron robes billowing.

Prabhupāda stood on the roof of his Māyāpur building, looking over to the birthplace of Caitanya Mahāprabhu less than a mile away. "Actually," he said to Bhavānanda Mahārāja, "their claim to the birthplace of Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not very important. Is Kṛṣṇa famous for having been born in Mathurā? No. He is famous for His activities. Similarly, Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not famous for having been born in Māyāpur. He is famous for His activities, for His saṅkīrtana preaching. This Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir is the preaching of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Therefore I want a place that is so attractive because of the activities of Caitanya Mahāprabhu that everyone will come here!"

* * *

While in Calcutta, before coming to Māyāpur, Prabhupāda had called several senior disciples into his room. "I have had many requests," he had said to them, "to translate Caitanya-bhāgavata. But I am going to translate the entire Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Is that all right?"

"Oh, yes, Prabhupāda," Bhavānanda Goswami had replied, "that's wonderful."

Decades ago Prabhupāda had written essays based on the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, and over the years he had translated some of the verses and written purports to them. Then in America in 1968 he had completed Teachings of Lord Caitanya, a summary study based on certain important passages of Caitanya-caritāmṛta. During his stay in Māyāpur, however, he began anew a translation and commentary of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's Caitanya-caritāmṛta, beginning with the Seventh Chapter. As he progressed, he found a wonderful momentum and said he would publish a volume, starting with Chapter Seven, for Lord Caitanya's appearance day in March. Deciding to complete the entire Caitanya-caritāmṛta, he suspended his work on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

In one of the first verses of the Seventh Chapter, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja states, "Let me offer my obeisances to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has manifested Himself in five, as a devotee, expansion of a devotee, incarnation of a devotee, pure devotee, and devotional energy." Prabhupāda wrote that the only way for people to be elevated in love of Kṛṣṇa in the age of Kali is by the mercy of the Pañca-tattva, or Lord Caitanya in His form of five personalities. One should offer obeisances to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by chanting the Pañca-tattva mantra, śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda. This mantra should be recited before one chants the mahā-mantra, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. "There are ten offenses in the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra," Prabhupāda wrote, "but these are not considered in the chanting of the Pañca-tattva mahā-mantra... One must first take shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, learn the Pañca-tattva mahā-mantra, and then chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra."

Verse after verse of the Seventh Chapter confirmed the essential principles of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission and attested that he was teaching exactly after the method advised by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

The characteristics of Kṛṣṇa are understood to be a storehouse of transcendental love. Although that storehouse of love certainly came with Kṛṣṇa when He was present, it was sealed. But when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came with His other associates, the Pañca-tattva, they broke the seal and

plundered the storehouse to taste transcendental love of Kṛṣṇa. The more they tasted it, the more their thirst for it grew.

Śrī Pañca-tattva themselves danced again and again and thus made it easier to drink nectarean love of Godhead. They danced, cried, laughed and chanted like madmen, and in this way they distributed love of Godhead.

In commenting on these verses Prabhupāda wrote,

The present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement follows the same principle, and therefore simply by chanting and dancing we have received good responses all over the world. It is to be understood, however, that this chanting and dancing do not belong to this material world. They are actually transcendental activities, for the more one engages in chanting and dancing, the more he can taste the nectar of transcendental love of Godhead.

By the phrase "Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement," Prabhupāda spoke not only of his own disciples and his Kṛṣṇa consciousness society but also of the movement inaugurated by Lord Caitanya. Just as the original Personality of Godhead and the Deity of Kṛṣṇa in the temple were the same, so the movement of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Prabhupāda's Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement were identical.

In distributing love of Godhead, Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates did not consider who was a fit candidate and who was not, nor where such distribution should or should not take place. They made no conditions. Wherever they got the opportunity the members of the Pañca-tattva distributed love of Godhead.

For Śrīla Prabhupāda, this verse directly confirmed the instruction he had received from his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, that people of all births could become Vaiṣṇavas, brāhmaṇas, and sannyāsīs. Here was direct evidence from the scripture, yet Prabhupāda, like his own spiritual master, had often received criticism from the caste-conscious brāhmaṇas of India. With the proof in hand, Prabhupāda now challenged his envious critics.

There are some rascals who dare to speak against the mission of Lord Caitanya by criticizing the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for accepting Europeans and Americans as brāhmaṇas and offering them sannyāsa. But here is an authoritative statement that in distributing love of Godhead one should not consider whether the recipients are Europeans, Americans, Hindus, Muslims, etc. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should be spread wherever possible, and one should accept those who thus become Vaiṣṇavas as being greater than brāhmaṇas, Hindus or Indians. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu desired that His name be spread in each and every town and village on the surface of the globe. Therefore, when the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu is spread all over the world, should those who embrace it not be accepted as Vaiṣṇavas, brāhmaṇas and sannyāsīs? These foolish arguments are sometimes raised by envious rascals, but Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees do not care about them. We strictly follow the principles set down by the Pañca-tattva.

Another criticism Śrīla Prabhupāda encountered was that his emphasis on proselytizing was actually alien to Indian spirituality. Even Prabhupāda's Godbrothers had occasionally made such

remarks. More often, however, this sentiment came from the impersonalists, who argued that people should be left to conceive of religion in their own ways; religion, being an internal, spiritual affair, should not be propagated by zealous evangelism. Preaching and conversion, they said, were for the Christians, not for followers of Indian religion. In the Seventh Chapter of Caitanya-caritāmṛta's Ādi-līlā, however, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, reveals His heart and emotion as the ideal preacher.

Although the members of the Pañca-tattva plundered the storehouse of love of Godhead and ate and distributed the contents, there was no scarcity, for this wonderful storehouse is so complete that as the love is distributed, the supply increases hundreds of times.

The flood of love of Godhead swelled in all directions, and thus young men, old men, women and children were all immersed in that inundation.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will inundate the entire world and drown everyone, whether one be a gentleman, a rogue or even lame, invalid or blind.

When the first five members of the Pañca-tattva saw the entire world drowned in love of Godhead and the seed of material enjoyment in the living entities completely destroyed, they all became exceedingly happy.

The more the five members of the Pañca-tattva caused the rains of love of Godhead to fall, the more the inundation increased and spread all over the world.

This was Śrīla Prabhupāda's spirit in training young men and women in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and he was offering these words of Lord Caitanya to strengthen all the Lord's devotees. The members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should be confident that by preaching purely they would meet with success. Prabhupāda was confident. Here were the words of śāstra, words spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And Prabhupāda's personal experience confirmed the same. Thus he could write,

Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started singlehandedly, and no one provided for our livelihood, but at present we are spending hundreds and thousands of dollars all over the world and the movement is increasing more and more. Although jealous persons may be envious, if we stick to our principles and follow the footsteps of the Pañca-tattva, this movement will go on unchecked by imitation swamis, sannyāsīs, religionists, philosophers or scientists, for it is transcendental to all material considerations. Therefore, those who propagate the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should not be afraid of such rascals and fools.

The verses of the Seventh Chapter described a worldwide inundation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus the objections that Europeans and Americans could not become brāhmaṇas or sannyāsīs would be swept away as Lord Caitanya's mercy flooded the entire world. Nothing could check it.

The words of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja intensified Prabhupāda's desire to base his worldwide movement in the land where Lord Caitanya appeared and began His saṅkīrtana movement. The Pañca-tattva had begun in Navadvīpa, and from here the waves of love of Godhead were swelling outward.

In Śrīdhāma Māyāpur, there is sometimes a great flood after the rainy season. This is an indication that from the birthplace of Lord Caitanya the inundation of love of Godhead should spread all over the world, for this will help everyone, including old men, young men, women and children. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is so powerful that it can inundate the entire world and interest all classes of men in the subject of love of Godhead.

In this Seventh Chapter of the Ādi-līlā, Prabhupāda found many other evidences authorizing ISKCON under the principles of Lord Caitanya's teachings and activities. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja says that Lord Caitanya's taking sannyāsa was a trick for delivering certain classes of society who would otherwise not have shown Him respect. Prabhupāda, in his commentary, explained that he also had devised schemes for offering the benefits of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to as wide a spectrum of society as possible, and he cited his acceptance of women into the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. "Therefore it is a principle," he wrote, "that a preacher must strictly follow the rules and regulations laid down in the śāstra, yet at the same time devise a means by which the preaching work to reclaim the fallen may go on with full force."

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June 27, 1973

From Māyāpur Śrīla Prabhupāda went to Calcutta. He wrote to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami,

...There is a suggestion by Shyamsundar that I may go to London for meeting very important men there in the new house given us by George... But I want to make some definite settlement of Bombay affairs before I return to Europe or America. If there is a suitable place for me to stay for a few days in Bombay I can go there immediately and from there I may go to London.

While considering his itinerary, Prabhupāda passed some days in the Calcutta temple on Albert Road. He was very free about allowing people to see him, and his room was often filled with local Bengalis as well as his own disciples, seated on the white sheet before him. In the evenings he would go, even when it meant riding for miles through congested parts of the city, to spend an hour in someone's home, preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's sister, Bhavatāriṇī (known as Piśimā to Prabhupāda's disciples), would also visit the Calcutta temple to see her beloved brother and, as usual, to cook for him. One day, however, a few hours after eating her kachaurīs, Prabhupāda felt sharp pains in his stomach. He closed his doors and went to bed. His followers became very concerned. When his servant, Śrutakīrti, came into the room, he found him tossing.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda, what's wrong?"

"My stomach," Prabhupāda replied. "That coconut kachaurī—it was not cooked."

The seizure continued all night, and several devotees continually massaged Prabhupāda's body, especially his stomach. But with every breath he would moan. Piśimā was standing by, but

Prabhupāda's disciples feared her presence, thinking she might want to cook something else for him, even in his illness.

Prabhupāda asked that the picture of Lord Nṛsiṃha be taken from the altar and put beside his bed. Some devotees feared that Prabhupāda might be about to pass away. The next morning, when the illness continued, the devotees called for the local kaviṛāja (Ayur-vedic doctor).

The old kaviṛāja came and diagnosed Prabhupāda's illness as severe blood dysentery. He left medicine, but it was ineffectual. Later, when Prabhupāda called Bhavānanda to his room and requested fried purīs with a little paṭala [an Indian vegetable similar to a small squash] and salt, Bhavānanda protested; such fried foods would be the worst thing for him. Prabhupāda said that this was the blood dysentery cure his mother had given during his childhood. He then called for his sister, and speaking to her in Bengali, told her to prepare purīs and paṭala. A few hours after taking the food, Prabhupāda again called Bhavānanda; he was feeling better. "My mother was right," he remarked.

A lengthy telegram arrived from Śyāmasundara, glorifying the preaching opportunities that awaited Prabhupāda in London, where he would be picked up at the airport in a helicopter and flown to the main event—the greatest Ratha-yātrā ever held. The parade would proceed down Picadilly Lane, climaxing under a large pavilion at Trafalgar Square. The telegram went on to say that millions of Englishmen—including certain very, very important people—were eager to see Śrīla Prabhupāda and that arrangements were underway for Prabhupāda to instruct the Queen's eldest son, Prince Charles, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Some of the promises were exaggerated, Śrīla Prabhupāda knew, but his desire to preach again in England was strong. George Harrison had given the devotees a large estate forty-five minutes outside of London, and Prabhupāda spoke of going there and installing Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on Janmāṣṭamī day. Yet even now, over a month before Janmāṣṭamī, he was feeling deeply affected by Śyāmasundara's invitation. Although still exhausted from dysentery, he considered flying immediately to London.

Calling in those G.B.C. secretaries and sannyāsīs with him in Calcutta, sitting up in bed while they sat before him on the floor, Prabhupāda asked their advice. They concluded that he should go to a healthier climate—Los Angeles or Hawaii—to rest and recuperate. Prabhupāda mildly agreed as his advisors decided Hawaii would be the best place, a place where the climate was ideal and where he would have few interruptions. Suddenly, however, he sat up straighter. He would return to the West, he said, but to London, not to Hawaii. And not to recuperate, but to preach!

"Let me strike while the iron is hot," he said. "I think that is an English maxim. If you do that, then you can keep the iron in shape. In the West, people are fed up. So we want to give them spiritual enlightenment."

Prabhupāda had immediately convinced his disciples with his forceful statements. "There are two misleading theories in the West," he continued. "One is that life comes from matter, and the other is that there is no life after death—you can just enjoy this life. They say everything is matter. So as this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement grows, the Communists will be curbed down. People say they

are trying for unity, but they have no brains to see how this will achieve unity. They have formed a big complicated League of Nations and now United Nations, but they all fail. But this simple method of Ratha-yātrā—all over the world it is spreading. Jagannātha means "Lord of the universe." So Lord Jagannātha is now international God, through our ISKCON. Therefore, I want to go to the West and give them these things."

Although Prabhupāda appeared physically unfit to immediately fly to London to the active preaching that awaited him, his disciples submitted, accepting this as another miracle by Kṛṣṇa.

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London

July 7, 1973

Paravidha: It was Ratha-yātrā day. I saw Prabhupāda coming into the temple, and he didn't look very strong. I was really amazed, but I could understand that his strength was something spiritual.

Dhruvanātha: At the parade site we were waiting to receive Śrīla Prabhupāda at Marble Arch, where the procession starts. The vyāsāsana was nicely decorated, and everybody was expecting Prabhupāda simply to sit on his vyāsāsana on the cart and just ride through the streets, just as he had done in the other Ratha-yātrās. So it was to our great amazement and joy that when Prabhupāda came, he refused to sit on the vyāsāsana. He indicated that he would dance and lead the procession!

Yogeśvara: They brought stairs up so Prabhupāda could mount the ratha cart and sit down on the vyāsāsana. But he waved them off and just started walking with the chariots, leading the dancing.

Dhīraśānta: I twisted my ankle and couldn't walk, so I rode on the cart. Therefore I could see Prabhupāda very clearly. Revatīnandana Mahārāja was chanting into the microphone from the cart, but after about fifteen minutes of the procession Prabhupāda told the devotees to tell Revatīnandana Mahārāja and the others to come down and lead the kīrtana in the street with him.

Revatīnandana: When Prabhupāda saw his vyāsāsana on the cart, he said, "No, I am just a devotee. I will go in the procession." We had a big, great kīrtana. Hamsadūta led, I led, Śyāmasundara led—different devotees traded off, leading this fantastic kīrtana. And Prabhupāda was right in the middle of the kīrtana with his karatālas the whole time. He was dancing back and forth and jumping up and down and dancing.

Rohiṇī-nandana: The cart was going quite slowly. Prabhupāda walked about twenty or thirty yards ahead of the cart, leading the procession. Meanwhile the kīrtana was coming from the ratha cart through microphones. Prabhupāda called them all down, and he got them all around himself, and they were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Ever so often he would turn around and raise both his arms very majestically in the air and say, "Jaya Jagannātha!" Sometimes we would get a little further ahead, so then he would turn around and wait for the cart to come on. Sometimes he was dancing, and sometimes he would stand, raising his hands in the air.

Śārādīyā dāsī: Prabhupāda would dance, and then after a few feet he would turn around and look up at the deities with his arms raised. Then he would dance for a few moments, meditating on the deities, and then he would turn around and go on. In this way he danced the entire way. The devotees held hands in a circle around him to protect him from the crowd. It was a wonderful, transcendental affair. Prabhupāda was looking up at the deities, and all the devotees were behind him.

Sudurjaya: Prabhupāda surprised us. We didn't know if he was sick or not, feeling weak and dizzy or not. Sometimes he looked very ill, and sometimes he looked like an eighteen-year-old boy. He surprised us. He had his cane in his hand but raised it in the air as he danced. After a while, Śyāmasundara came up to me and said, "Listen, he's not going to make it. Prabhupāda is very ill. I want you to follow in a car. Be within thirty seconds ' reach so we can put Prabhupāda in the car immediately." Prabhupāda was going down Park Lane, and from time to time he would turn back and raise his hands. He was going so fast that they couldn't pull the cart fast enough to keep up with him. He would have to wait for the cart to catch up. He would turn back, raise his hands, and say, "Haribol!" Several times he did this. He was going so fast that he had to wait. The devotees were dancing, the weather was beautiful, and the crowd was wonderful.

Dhruvanātha: The passersby were rooted to the spot, looking at Prabhupāda. A man of that age simply dancing and jumping in the air like a young boy was the most amazing sight! And then every five minutes or so Prabhupāda would turn around and look toward Jagannātha. The devotees would clear the way so no one blocked his sight, and he had a perfect view of Jagannātha, Balarāma, and Subhadrā. But after a while the police came and motioned that we couldn't keep stopping like this. We had to keep the whole thing going, because the traffic jams were becoming critical. Devotees were crying and chanting and dancing, and there was much commotion.

Śrutakīrti: When Prabhupāda was dancing, the bobbies kept on coming up and looking for someone official. Finally they came to me and said, "You'll have to tell your leader to sit down. He's causing too much of a disturbance. Everyone is becoming wild, and we can't control the crowd, you know." So I said, "All right." But I didn't say anything to Prabhupāda.

So then they came again and said, "You must tell him he'll have to sit down." So I said, "All right," and I tapped Prabhupāda. The whole time he had been in ecstasy, dancing before the cart and encouraging everyone else to dance. He would motion with his hands and encourage the devotees to keep dancing. He kept the momentum of the festival. So I said, "Prabhupāda, the policemen want you to sit down. They say you are creating havoc in the parade." Prabhupāda looked at me, turned, and kept on. He completely ignored it and kept on dancing. And they couldn't do anything. Prabhupāda wouldn't stop, and the police wouldn't say anything to him.

Paravidha: I was distributing Back to Godhead magazines along the whole parade route. I was exhausted, and I was having a lot of trouble keeping up with the procession. But Prabhupāda was just there, and he was dancing like a young boy. I was amazed at his spiritual energy.

Dhruvanātha: When we came to Picadilly Circus, Prabhupāda suddenly stopped the whole procession. Picadilly Circus, of course, was just packed with people. For about three minutes Prabhupāda stopped the procession and just danced and danced with the devotees all around him.

Rohiṇī-nandana: When we got to Picadilly Circus, Prabhupāda really started to dance. He was leaping off the ground. The cart was stopped. It was very similar, actually, to the description in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta of how Lord Caitanya would lead the Ratha-yātrā procession. So the cart was stopped, and then Prabhupāda would wait for it to catch up.

Yogeśvara: When we finally arrived at Trafalgar Square and Prabhupāda saw the big tent and the other arrangements the devotees had made, he held up his hands again. He had been dancing and walking the entire route of the parade. It must have been at least an hour that he had been walking and dancing—all the way from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square.

Rohiṇī-nandana: When Prabhupāda got to Trafalgar Square, he immediately sat down on the plinth of Nelson's Column on a little vyāsāsana and delivered a lecture about the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. This was directly after his marathon of chanting and dancing.

The next day's papers carried favorable news coverage of the festival, and Prabhupāda wrote of it to a disciple in Los Angeles.

You will be glad to know the Rathayatra in London was very successful. The Daily Guardian had a picture on the front page of our cart and stated that we were competition to the monument in memory of Lord Nelson in Trafalgar Square. My health is good and I am taking daily walk and speaking at the class in the morning.

In another letter Prabhupāda wrote,

Our festival here was very well received and I was so much encouraged by the whole thing that I was able to walk and dance the entire way from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square.

Śrīla Prabhupāda settled into a regular routine at Bhaktivedanta Manor. "Here at Bhaktivedanta Manor," he wrote, "the place is the nicest possible. It is calm and quiet, and the village is neat and clean." Prabhupāda's room on the second floor was spacious enough to seat fifty guests comfortably, and its large windows overlooked the expansive grounds.

Prabhupāda said that if the devotees would clean out the lake and keep up the grounds, then he would stay always at Bhaktivedanta Manor and translate here in peace. They should get some cows, he said, and use some of the extra acreage for farming.

Although the devotees had not long been living in the Manor and had done little to improve the buildings and grounds, Prabhupāda pointed out a place where they could one day build a thirty-story temple, the grandest building in all of London. He proposed that he stay for at least two months and install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on Janmāṣṭamī day; he would also oversee the construction of the temple room and altar.

Every morning at about six Prabhupāda would leave the Manor for an hour's walk. There was no restriction as to who could join him, and sometimes as many as twenty devotees would trail behind, trying to hear anything he might say. Looking off toward the horizon, he commented that Letchmore Heath reminded him of Vṛndāvana.

Prabhupāda would walk down the lane to a place called Round Bush, stroll past a wheat field, and finally return to Letchmore Heath and the Manor. A local policeman had become friends with the devotees and would regularly exchange greetings with Prabhupāda. Particularly Prabhupāda liked the cleanliness of the little village, and he would often point out even the smallest pieces of trash on the Manor grounds. The village, he said, was much neater than American towns.

Śyāmasundara had promised Śrīla Prabhupāda many interested visitors, and Śrīla Prabhupāda reciprocated, promising that as long as the interested people kept coming, he would remain in England. Each night one or two guests—including scholars, priests, and occasional celebrities—would come and visit with Prabhupāda for a couple of hours. Prabhupāda seemed especially eager to present the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to intelligent persons. As the world's foremost Vaiṣṇava paramparā philosopher of the Gītā and the Bhāgavatam, he had thoroughly realized the conclusions of the Vedic literature. He was experienced in countering all challenges and atheistic philosophies and knew what to expect from Christian, Māyāvādī, atheist—anyone. If a guest mentioned the name of a philosopher or school of thought unfamiliar to Prabhupāda, then Prabhupāda would simply ask, “What is his philosophy?” Inevitably he would recognize the “new” philosophy for what it was: an old, familiar mundane philosophy—with a new twist perhaps—easily defeated or brought to its perfection with Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda was always eager to glorify Kṛṣṇa and repeat Kṛṣṇa's message, and with complete, enthusiastic freshness he would present again the same points he had presented many, many times before. He said he was like a cow that gives milk in any field. Put him in India or America or England—he would always give the same nectarean milk of Bhagavad-gītā.

Prabhupāda's entire day—his early-morning dictation of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, morning walk, Bhagavad-gītā lecture, talks with guests—revolved around philosophy. In Scotland, when a man had challenged that God needn't be presented through philosophy, Prabhupāda had replied, “What do you expect me to talk, some fairy tales?” Philosophy was necessary, especially for the so-called intelligent persons, whose minds raised so many intellectual doubts. And besides, to always be telling others about Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda said, was a symptom of love.

Moved by compassion for others' suffering, Prabhupāda always spoke the message of Kṛṣṇa and never tired of repeating it. He was genuinely angered by the atheistic speculators who mislead the people, because materialistic and impersonalistic philosophies ruined a person's chances of finding the solution to life's suffering. Whenever Prabhupāda heard anyone arguing the Māyāvāda doctrine, he would become like fire. He could not tolerate it. He had to correct it. When, after one of Prabhupāda's lectures at the Manor, a boy had said he had heard someone call the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa “a little bit of a bluff,” Prabhupāda had replied, “Who says bluff? Who is that fool? Who is that rascal?” He had been ready to fight the atheist to glorify Kṛṣṇa.

These were Prabhupāda's natural drives; therefore he could go on and on, without stopping. He wanted to give people Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He had no other life. Even while relaxing in the privacy of his room he always spoke of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The devotees had invited many prominent British citizens to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda, and the responses were good. Economist Ernst Schumacher promised to visit, as did philosopher Sir Alfred J. Ayer. When Śyāmasundara informed Prabhupāda that Mr. Ayer was well known, Prabhupāda replied, "What is his philosophy?"

"Well," Śyāmasundara replied, "he doesn't believe in the existence of God."

"I will give him evidence," Prabhupāda replied. "I will ask him what he means by 'the existence of God.' I will ask him to make a list of the deficiencies of God's existence." Prabhupāda liked to meet with philosophical men and "corner them and defeat them."

Historian Arnold Doyenne was old and invalid; therefore, Prabhupāda agreed to visit him at his residence. Interested in discussing life after death, Dr. Doyenne asked Prabhupāda about karma. Most people, he said, were afraid of death. Prabhupāda agreed and added that according to a certain astrologer, one of India's recent leaders had taken birth as a dog. "So they are afraid they will go down," he said. When Doyenne asked if karma could be changed, Prabhupāda replied yes, but only by bhakti, devotion to God.

Arnold Doyenne: "Not many people in the West are thinking of this."

Prabhupāda: "They are less intelligent. It is not good. If they take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they can continue to work and live in the city, but they can change their consciousness. Then automatically everything will come."

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Dr. Toynbee about the book he was writing, and the professor replied that it concerned ancient Greece's influence on the Greece of today. "The Greeks came from India," Prabhupāda said. "Vedic culture was once all over the world. Gradually, a new type of culture—just like this recent partition of India and Pakistan—took place."

Prabhupāda explained how in the future the governments would fall to rascals and thieves, whose only business would be to exploit the citizens. Food would be scarce. And the governments would levy so many taxes that the people would be harassed and go to the forests for shelter. Only the God conscious people would be free. The future would be an ocean of faults, with but one saving factor: simply by chanting Kṛṣṇa's names one could be freed. Even now, Prabhupāda said, the hippies were going to the forest, and the men were separated from their wives and money and were going to the hills and forests in disappointment. "You can predict the future in this way," Prabhupāda said.

Arnold Toynbee: "In India did the politicians keep the Vedas?"

Prabhupāda: "No, they threw them away. Present Indian politicians are not very satisfied with the Vedas. They threw them in the water. I have started, among the Indians and Americans; and for the

next ten thousand years Kṛṣṇa consciousness will increase. Then there will be a gloomy picture of Kali-yuga. Ten thousand years is not a short time. It is our duty on behalf of Kṛṣṇa."

Arnold Toynbee: "Do you travel much?"

Prabhupāda: "All over the world."

A bearded young priest active in social service visited Prabhupāda and, upon Prabhupāda's prodding, debated with him about meat-eating and the Bible. During the discussion, Hamsadūta and Pradyumna were citing passages from the Bible against meat-eating. Later, after the priest had left, Prabhupāda called Hamsadūta back into his room and said, "It was not very good for us to speak on the basis of the Bible. Better we stick to the Gītā. Why bother to approach them for compromise or cooperation? They will never be convinced. What is the point of meeting with the Pope?" Those inclined to meat-eating, Prabhupāda said, could always find some quote in the Bible, such as the covenant with Noah after the flood. "We do not even know what ghastly things are occurring in the slaughterhouse," he said. "No one sees these things."

The next morning on his walk Prabhupāda continued discussing his talk with the priest. "In the name of religion," Prabhupāda said, "they are killing. The Bhāgavatam says this cheating religion is kicked out and simply worship of God is instated."

Devotee: "The priest last night said that Jesus ate meat."

Prabhupāda: "Then Jesus contradicted himself. He also said, 'Thou shalt not kill.' One shouldn't imitate the īśvaras. A hippie-type mendicant in India takes gañjā and claims to be a devotee of Śiva. No, we should not imitate the powerful controllers. That priest said also that the Bible does not say, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but 'Thou shalt not murder.' So I told him that if the word is actually 'Thou shalt not murder' in the original Hebrew, then Jesus must have been preaching to the fourth-class, tenth-class men—murderers. And the proof is that they murdered him. So such people, what can they understand about God? When I told him, the priest was silent. He could not answer."

Another priest came to see Prabhupāda, and again the question came up. Prabhupāda asked him, "Then you are in favor of killing?"

The priest replied, "Well, it is a fallen world."

"It is a fallen world," said Prabhupāda, "but we do not have to be among the fallen." The priest cited the covenant with Noah.

Prabhupāda replied, "Maybe Noah allowed it at that time, the time of devastation, but that doesn't mean you always have to do it. To live in such a time, one can eat anything to stay alive, but now so many things are in abundance to keep healthy without maintaining a slaughterhouse. In the Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa says, 'Protect the cows; it is the duty of the vaiśyas.' "

Although Prabhupāda willingly discussed with Christians, he admitted privately that to argue with them was a waste of time. "They will never agree," he said, "even if they are defeated." The best way

to preach to people in general was through the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, as at the Ratha-yātrā festival. Chant, dance, take prasādam, and invite everyone to join. "Anyway," he said, "they don't even follow their teachings. One boy came to me and said he wanted to talk. He said, 'I am a Christian,' but I told him, 'You are not a Christian. Thou shalt not kill.'"

A man from Calcutta came to see Prabhupāda. But as soon as the man began to say something about Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda interrupted: "Kṛṣṇa is something very difficult to understand. We are just trying to understand that there is a next life."

"But the Christians say there is no future life," the man said. "At the end of this one you either go to heaven or hell."

"But if they talk about going to heaven," said Prabhupāda, "then that is the next life. But knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is only for the most perfect out of thousands among men."

A Mr. Kumar, who sometimes lived in the London temple, visited Prabhupāda with many questions. He wanted to work for ISKCON, he said, but required money to send his mother in India. "No," Prabhupāda told him, "our men work twenty-four hours a day without a farthing." Mr. Kumar suggested ways to improve ISKCON. The devotees needed to study more, he said, especially Sanskrit, and become scholars.

Prabhupāda disagreed. "All we need is dedication," he said. "I am not a great Sanskrit scholar, but I am pulling on. And even the scholars say it is good. My Guru Mahārāja's Guru Mahārāja [Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja] was illiterate. Still, his disciple, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, was the greatest scholar of the day. But when Gaurakiśora spoke, it was exactly from the śāstra. Our principle is not to take time to learn something and become expert and then preach. But whatever you know, preach. Class in the morning, class in the evening, and if they read my books, that is sufficient."

One day the devotees brought Prabhupāda a newspaper clipping in which an Oxford professor, Dr. D. Zaehner, had said at a religion conference that Lord Kṛṣṇa and His Bhagavad-gītā teachings were "immoral." Dr. Zaehner had said that a famous murderer was perhaps influenced by the Bhagavad-gītā, because Kṛṣṇa says that the soul is immortal, so one can therefore kill. Śrīla Prabhupāda was disgusted at the professor's ignorance. On his morning walk he dictated to his secretary arguments to use in writing to Dr. Zaehner.

George Harrison approached Prabhupāda in a submissive mood similar to that of Prabhupāda's disciples. Prabhupāda and George took prasādam together, a special lunch of samosās, hālavā, vegetables, sour cream, and purīs. While they were enjoying the prasādam, Prabhupāda mentioned that certain Vṛndāvana paṇḍās (professional guides at a holy place) eat too much. Once one ate so much that he was practically dying, but he assured his son, "At least I am dying from eating, and not from starving. To die of starvation is unglorious." Prabhupāda smiled as he talked with George, gratefully acknowledging his donation of the Manor. "Have you seen my room?" Prabhupāda asked. "It is actually your house, but my room."

"No," George protested, preferring the mood of a humble disciple, "it is Kṛṣṇa's house and your room."

When George confided to Prabhupāda that by taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness he was losing friends, Prabhupāda told him not to worry. He read to George from the Gītā, where Kṛṣṇa explains that He can be known only by devotional service.

"In the future," said George, "ISKCON will be so large it will require executive management."

Prabhupāda: "I have divided the world into twelve zones with twelve representatives. As long as they keep to the spiritual principles, Kṛṣṇa will help them."

Before leaving, George assured Prabhupāda that he would help him increase his temples. Later Prabhupāda commented, "George is getting inward hope from Kṛṣṇa."

One day an old acquaintance dropped by—Allen Ginsberg, wearing denims, suspenders, and a faded shirt and carrying a little Indian-made harmonium. "You are still chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Yes," Allen replied, "I still chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, but I also chant other things."

Allen asked if Prabhupāda would like to hear his chanting and playing. Prabhupāda nodded. Allen began playing his harmonium and chanting om̐. With each recitation of the word om̐, his voice went deeper—"Ooom."

When the chant was over, Prabhupāda began to laugh. "You can chant whatever you want to chant," he said. "But just keep chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. As long as you are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, then everything else is all right." Prabhupāda then allowed many devotees to join them for a big, blissful kīrtana.

Through George Harrison, another famous pop singer and musician, Donovan, was drawn to come and see the renowned leader of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Donovan, accompanied by a musician friend and their two girl friends in miniskirts, sat in awkward silence before Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda spoke: "There is a verse in the Vedas that says music is the highest form of education." And he began to explain how a musician could serve Kṛṣṇa. "You should do like your friend George," Prabhupāda said. "We will give you the themes, and you can write the songs." Prabhupāda said that anything, even money, could be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa.

"But money is material," Donovan's girl friend interrupted.

"What do you know what is material and spiritual?" Prabhupāda said. He turned to Donovan, "Do you understand?" Donovan humbly replied that he was thickheaded but trying. Donovan's girl friend then leaned over and whispered something into his ear, whereupon Donovan stood up and said, "Well, we have to go now." Prabhupāda insisted that at least they first take some prasādam.

As soon as the guests left, Prabhupāda and his disciples began to laugh. Prabhupāda said, "She was thinking..." and he encouraged his disciples to finish the sentence.

"Yes," said Yogeśvara, "she was thinking that if Kṛṣṇa gets him, then she will lose him."

Prabhupāda so much liked preaching to important guests that he wanted to continue doing so wherever he traveled. "Wherever I shall go now," Prabhupāda wrote in a letter to a disciple, "this policy of important men being invited to talk with me about our Krishna Consciousness movement should be implemented."

A month passed at the Manor, and still several weeks remained before Janmāṣṭamī and the Deity installation. So when Bhagavān requested Prabhupāda to come for a visit to Paris and install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, Prabhupāda agreed.

* * *

Paris

August 9, 1973

The devotees had arranged an official City Hall reception for Śrīla Prabhupāda. In the presence of the mayor of Paris and his government entourage, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that if the government leaders do not teach the citizens genuine God consciousness, then they are not responsible leaders. Reporting this talk in the next day's paper, a news writer stated that the swami even criticized Napoleon Bonaparte.

Bhagavān: We had just moved into our new temple at 4 Rue le Sueur, Paris, and we had received forty-eight-inch Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa Deities. Prabhupāda had Pradyumna chanting the mantras and pouring the substances on the Deities while Prabhupāda himself looked on from his vyāsāsana, giving directions. I was assisting, and at one point I turned around and saw Śrīla Prabhupāda standing right next to me, taking the substances in his own hands and smearing them over the lotuslike face of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. After the Deities were installed on the altar, Śrīla Prabhupāda came up and offered the āratī and I assisted him by handing him the articles.

After the installation we went up to Śrīla Prabhupāda's room and very anxiously requested him to please give a name for the Deities. He sat back in his chair and said that the Deities will be known as Rādhā-Paris-īśvara. He then went on to say that in India people look to England for education and to Paris for sense gratification. He began to laugh and said that Kṛṣṇa has come to Paris in order to get some gopīs, some French girls, because the faces of the women in Paris are considered the most beautiful. "Rādhārāṇī is so beautiful," Prabhupāda said, "just like a Paris girl. And Kṛṣṇa has come here to find out this most beautiful of all the gopīs. So He is Paris-īśvara."

* * *

August 15

Prabhupāda returned to London and the latest mail from India. A legal complication had arisen regarding the deed for ISKCON's land in Hyderabad. Prabhupāda wrote his disciple Mahāmsa, cautioning him to avoid becoming entangled in another Bombay affair. When Prabhupāda also received word that the temple construction was progressing in Vṛndāvana, he replied,

I am pleased to hear how you are completely absorbed in the project of our Vrindaban temple and taxing your brain how it can be carried out. I am also always praying to Krishna that He may give you intelligence to carry it out rightly.

In a letter to a disciple in Hawaii, Prabhupāda apologized for not replying to a letter.

I was very busy in Bombay for the Juhu land of Mr. N. Now he is dead and gone, but he had created so many obstacles... Still there is discrepancy. But I hope this will be squared up without delay.

Writing to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami in Bombay, Prabhupāda was as attentive as ever to the ongoing troubles there. Although the devotees remained in possession of the land and had rebuilt their temporary temple, no purchase settlement was in sight.

If Mrs. N. is not going to sell us the land then what next step we have to adopt?... We fixed a criminal case against her for attempting to dispossess us from the land, and what happened to that case? The idea is that if she is not going to sell the land to us, and at the same time does not return our money with damages and interest, and occasionally tries to dispossess us from the land, then what steps we have to take? She has given us so much trouble and botheration...

And Prabhupāda wrote to his disciples in Māyāpur,

Yes, Mayapur construction must be completely finished before I return. The next time I come there must be no more workers or carpenters with their "tack-tack" sound. I would have continued to stay in Mayapur but the hammering sounds drove me away. When you are completely finished I will go there, otherwise not.

Prabhupāda also answered dozens of letters from America, where the devotees were becoming more and more keen to distribute his books. Their letters contained very crucial questions that only Prabhupāda could solve: How important was book distribution? Could the devotees abandon their robes and wear regular Western clothes to better distribute books in public? Was chanting on the streets more important than book distribution? What about taking buses and vans around the country? Could they travel with Deities in the vans? The devotees generally mentioned their own viewpoint in their letters to Prabhupāda, and yet they respectfully awaited his definitive reply.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was now big, with potential for growing much bigger. And within ISKCON, Prabhupāda's will was so powerful that a single letter from him would establish a policy for years to come. Prabhupāda appeared to be sitting quietly in his room at the Manor, following his daily routine of bathing, eating, and meeting evening guests, yet at the same time he was directing thousands of young men and women all over the world and sending them into action in the war against māyā.

There is no objection to going in western clothes in order to distribute my books. It is not necessary that we always wear the robes, but we should always keep sikha and tilaka. However, a wig or a hat may be worn as you describe. We have to take whatever is the favorable position for executing Krishna consciousness. Do not forget our principles, but sometimes we may adopt such means in order to distribute books. Somehow or other distribute books and if you can impress people a little to chant then it does not matter about your dress.

The devotees continued to request clarification as to how far the ends justified the means in fulfilling Prabhupāda's order to distribute books profusely. Śrīla Prabhupāda, being free of any material motivation, could clearly see the Kṛṣṇa conscious thing to do.

Regarding the question you have raised about traveling sankirtana parties and selling of books, yes, we want money. So that is the real preaching, selling books. Who can speak better than the books? At least whoever buys, he will look over. The real preaching is selling books. You should know the tactic how to sell without irritating. What your lecture will do for three minutes, but if he reads one page his life may be turned. We don't want to irritate anyone, however. If he goes away by your aggressive tactics, then you are nonsense and it is your failure. Neither you could sell a book, neither he would remain. But if he buys a book, that is the real successful preaching. That is the certificate of my Guru Maharaja, if someone, brahmacari, would sell a one paise magazine, if one of our brahmacaris would go and sell a few copies, he would be very very glad and say, "Oh, you are so nice." So distribution of literature is our real preaching. Now if you cannot handle the matter nicely, that is your fault. But the success of your preaching will be substantiated by how many books are sold. Anything you want to sell, you have to canvass a little, so he gives some money for the service of Kṛṣṇa. That is his good luck and he gets the chance to read some transcendental knowledge. But if you only irritate and he goes away, that is your less intelligence.

Prabhupāda's instructions were so important to his disciples that a letter from him was as effective as a personal visit. By such letters he maintained the lives and affairs of his disciples all over the world. Each day in the late morning he would have his secretary read aloud each incoming letter, and usually he would dictate the answer without delay. He had often said that the vāṇī, or order, of the guru was more important than the vapuḥ, or personal presence. Thus by his letters he established and illuminated the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for his sincere followers.

In America now Prabhupāda's preaching was primarily through the distribution of his books, whereas in India it was through establishing temples. Yet both methods were one and the same to him. And although his vision encompassed the whole world, he felt and described himself as only the humble servant of his spiritual master. Whether sitting peacefully on the lawn of the Manor and teasing one of the little children or directing one of his lieutenants to "drop thousands and millions of books into the laps of the conditioned souls," whether meditating with great energy on the next phrase in his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam purports or worrying about what Mrs. N. was conspiring in Bombay—he always tried to serve his Guru Mahārāja.

Śrīla Prabhupāda received an emergency phone call from Bombay. Girirāja wanted him to come and personally settle with Mrs. N. the purchase of the Juhu land. Girirāja had consulted a new lawyer, Mr. Bakhil, who felt that Prabhupāda must be present for there to be a settlement. Another ISKCON lawyer, Mr. Chandawal, also advised that Śrīla Prabhupāda come immediately to Bombay.

Girirāja, therefore, had telephoned Prabhupāda, begging him to please come and settle the matter with Mrs. N. once and for all. Prabhupāda agreed. He would remain in London one more week, until Janmāṣṭamī. Then he would return to Bombay.

August 21

M. Rasgotra, the Indian ambassador to England, attended the Janmāṣṭamī day celebration and introduced Śrīla Prabhupāda, expressing his appreciation of Prabhupāda's great work. Prabhupāda spoke, describing the advent of Kṛṣṇa as the key to peace for the troubled material world. "Especially in India," he said, "we have got so much asset for understanding God. Everything is there, ready-made. But we won't accept. So what is the remedy for such disease? We are searching after peace, but we won't accept anything which is actually giving us peace. This is our disease. So the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to awaken the dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness in everyone's heart. Otherwise, how could these Europeans and Americans and other countrymen who had never even heard of Kṛṣṇa four or five years ago be taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness so seriously? Therefore Kṛṣṇa consciousness is there in everyone's heart."

Prabhupāda recited prayers from Brahma-saṁhitā describing the sublime, eternal existence of Kṛṣṇa on His eternal planet, Kṛṣṇaloka. "But Kṛṣṇa is also everywhere," he explained, "and if you are a devotee, then you can catch Him. If you want to catch Him, He comes forward ten times more than your desire. Therefore we simply have to receive Him. This Deity worship in the temple means worshipping Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He has very kindly accepted to assume a form which you can handle. Therefore do not think that we have installed a marble statue. The rascals will say, 'They are heathens.' No, we are worshipping Kṛṣṇa personally. Kṛṣṇa has kindly assumed this form because we cannot see the gigantic Kṛṣṇa or how Kṛṣṇa is everywhere. Remain twenty-four hours a day in Kṛṣṇa's service. This is the purpose of installing the Deity."

* * *

Bombay

September 15, 1973

The day after his arrival, Śrīla Prabhupāda met with Mrs. N.'s solicitors and heard their offers. The situation had begun to look hopeful, and yet the conclusion eluded them. Mrs. N. had become changed by the public reaction to her attempt to demolish the temple. If Prabhupāda would pay the full balance of twelve lakhs of rupees for the land in one payment, she told her lawyer, she would agree. Prabhupāda was agreeable but did not want to arrange to collect his money until he was certain that Mrs. N. was actually serious.

Mr. Asnani, a Bombay lawyer and ISKCON life member, regularly met with Mrs. N., persuading her to cooperate with Prabhupāda. Her lawyers concurred. Yet after Prabhupāda had been in Bombay for several weeks, no meeting with Mrs. N. had taken place. Once Mr. Asnani went to bring Mrs. N. to meet with Prabhupāda, but she was not feeling well. Day after day Mr. Asnani would tell Prabhupāda, "Mrs. N. will come tomorrow." Prabhupāda became disappointed at the procrastination, and seeing this, his secretaries told Mr. Asnani that although they knew he meant

well, they were inclined to have their other lawyers handle the case. Mr. Asnani asked for another forty-eight hours to close the deal and execute the conveyance.

Mrs. N. was at her other home, where she had just recovered from her illness, when Mr. Asnani visited. "Mātāji," he begged, "my Guru Mahārāja is leaving tomorrow. If you don't come tonight, the problem with the land will go on another year." Mrs. N. agreed, and around nine P.M. she and Mr. Asnani arrived at the home of Mr. Bogilal Patel, where Śrīla Prabhupāda was holding a program of kīrtana and Bhāgavata discourses. Prabhupāda was on the roof preparing to lecture, but hearing that Mrs. N. had arrived, he interrupted the meeting and came down to his room to talk with her. They talked briefly, and Prabhupāda excused himself and returned to the roof to lecture.

Around midnight, he returned to his room again. Mrs. N. was still waiting. She burst into tears and bowed at Prabhupāda's feet. "I am sorry for everything I've done," she sobbed. "Please forgive me." She promised to do whatever Prabhupāda wanted.

Prabhupāda looked at her compassionately and understood her heart. "You are just like my daughter," he said. "Don't worry. I will take care of you. I will see to all of your needs for the rest of your life." And Prabhupāda said he still accepted the very terms she had proposed: that he pay the remaining balance of twelve lakhs plus fifty thousand rupees compensation for the delay.

Prabhupāda and Mrs. N. had set November 1 as the tentative deadline for the final signing of the conveyance. Shortly after their meeting, Prabhupāda moved from Bogilal Patel's to the home of Mr. Sethi, where working intensely he tackled the remaining problems—such as getting C. Company to withdraw their claim.

Next he moved to the home of Mr. C. M. Khatau, just two blocks from Hare Krishna Land, where he lived in a summer cottage, a simple structure with a bamboo frame and chāṭāi walls. Usually, conveyances had to be signed in the presence of the city registrar at his office downtown, but Mr. Asnani had arranged for the registrar to come to Prabhupāda's place.

At six-thirty in the evening Śrīla Prabhupāda was seated at his low desk between two windows, his back against the wall. Mrs. N. and her lawyers, the registrar, Mr. Asnani, Mr. and Mrs. Sethi, and about eight devotees were present, and the full room grew warm and stuffy. Mrs. N. sat at Prabhupāda's right as the registrar prepared the papers for signing. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat gravely. The room was silent except for the sound of papers rustling and a pen's scratching. Preparing and signing the conveyance papers took more than twenty minutes. Prabhupāda paid Mrs. N., who then signed the conveyance. The land was legally ISKCON's.

Girirāja: The room was hushed during the signing, and everyone felt as if a momentous event was taking place—just as if two great world powers were signing a treaty. After Mrs. N. signed the document, everyone silently watched the papers being passed. She started to cry. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami quietly asked her why she was crying, and Mrs. N. replied that just that day Mr. Matar had come and told her he had found a buyer for the land for many more lakhs than we were paying. Actually, as we were watching Mrs. N., we were thinking that she must be remembering all the events that had taken place, the wrongs that she had done, the death of her husband. It was very intense, like a combination of months of struggling. So for Prabhupāda, the devotees, and

Prabhupāda's well-wishers, their dreams and desires and efforts over the past many years were being fulfilled.

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked that the devotees inform the newspapers, and he invited everyone into the hall outside his room for a feast. Mats were rolled out in two lines, and devotees brought leaf plates and placed them in front of everyone. The devotees began serving the various dishes to the two rows of seated guests.

Prabhupāda was standing. "Now let us start," he said, as he supervised the serving. The devotees had prepared several courses: rice, dāl, many varieties of pakorās (such as potato, cauliflower, and eggplant), po tato sabjī, wet cauliflower sabjī, papars, barfī, laḍḍus, camcam (a milk sweet), vermicelli khīr, hālavā, and a lime drink. It was a festive and happy occasion.

Mrs. Warriar (a tenant on Hare Krishna Land): The devotees were all saying "Jaya" after the signing, and all of them were very happy. Then Prabhupāda gave a lecture about the Bombay project. He gave an idea to all the people of how it would be all marble. There wouldn't be a single thing that wasn't built from marble. Some were asking how it would be possible for everything to be marble, and Prabhupāda explained that it was possible and could be done. He was visualizing the project, and everyone was thrilled to hear the way he was describing it. It would be like one of the seven wonders of the world. People would be attracted from all over to come and see it. It would be a landmark in Bombay. Prabhupāda explained the whole project as if he saw it in his mind's eye, and he said that after it was constructed it will be more than what we could visualize. It would be fantastic!

After the late feast, when everyone had departed, Prabhupāda returned to his room. Leaning back at his desk, he exclaimed, "It was a good fight!"

Later Prabhupāda would cite the story of the fight for the Bombay land as evidence that a person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness has no problems. "Now we have spent in Bombay eighteen to twenty lakhs of rupees," he said months later while on tour in Europe. "The property is actually worth fifty lakhs. People are surprised, and some of them are envious. But if you come, you will find that it is a very, very fine place. It is just like a paradise garden, twenty thousand square yards, and we have got six buildings. So actually, when we come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness there are no problems."

Surely the land was full of potential, but how could he say there had been no problems? "No problems" meant that Śrīla Prabhupāda saw how Kṛṣṇa personally arranged things for His devotees. When he had needed money, it had come, in an amount that ordinarily would have been impossible to collect. And the formidable opposition Kṛṣṇa had removed. Prabhupāda had no organized means of income and little political influence to fight persons like Mr. and Mrs. N., but because he was surrendered to Kṛṣṇa there was no problem. All the problems of the world were created by the nondevotees, who defied the injunctions of the Supreme. "Anyone who is in bhakti-yoga," Prabhupāda said, "he can understand that all problems are solved. We can practically see."

And yet he had had to tolerate the problems created by the nondevotees. For almost two years he had struggled to secure the land for Kṛṣṇa's service. Whether in Bombay or elsewhere, he had had to worry over how to help his inexperienced disciples, who were ill-equipped to handle the ploys of

the opposing party. It had been an ordeal, a test of patience, a challenge of courage. But because he had not been bewildered by *māyā*, illusion, there had been “no problem.”

Prabhupāda showed by his example that if one strictly follows *bhakti-yoga*, one is not touched by the modes of nature, by *māyā*. The same transcendental science he constantly taught in his lectures and informal discussions, he also personally demonstrated. He was faithful in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and all his problems had been adjusted. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that if one surrenders to Him, one easily overcomes all problems. The devotee understands that the problems of *māyā* can be overcome by surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, by surrendering to the orders of Kṛṣṇa's representative, the spiritual master.

Now that the land was ISKCON's, Prabhupāda could proceed to enact his vision. In attempting to construct buildings and propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he would meet more *māyā*-created problems, no doubt, but the greatest struggle had been won. The gorgeous temple of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsavihārī would manifest. In the future, devotees and guests could come to India's gateway and stay in a first-class hotel at Hare Krishna Land and conveniently imbibe the spiritual atmosphere of the temple. And the devotees, as long as they did not forget Prabhupāda's example and instruction, could successfully utilize the facility in the spirit of service to Kṛṣṇa. The price Prabhupāda had paid in tolerance and dependence on Kṛṣṇa would never go in vain.

What Śrīla Prabhupāda produced by his tolerance was not only the facilities and the ongoing mission at Hare Krishna Land but a monumental living example of the behavior of a *sādhū*. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Lord Kapiladeva describes the *sādhū*:

titikṣavaḥ kārūṇikāḥ

suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām

ajāta-śatravaḥ śāntā

sādhavaḥ sādhu-bhūṣaṇāḥ

“The symptoms of a *sādhū* are that he is tolerant, merciful, and friendly to all living entities. He has no enemies, he is peaceful, he abides by the scriptures, and all his characteristics are sublime.”

Because the *sādhū* is tolerant (*titikṣavaḥ*), he is undisturbed by the difficulties imposed by material nature. In Prabhupāda's attempts to secure the Juhu property, he had met with enemies and difficulties, and he had been tolerant. Prabhupāda had sometimes said, “You have to tolerate.”

And a *sādhū* is not only tolerant but merciful (*kārūṇikāḥ*). When ISKCON's provisional temple had been attacked by the police, Prabhupāda could have considered it a signal to leave the place and give up trying to help such ingrates by bringing them Kṛṣṇa consciousness— “Why go to such botheration? What's the use of trying?” He had already nearly a hundred temples outside of India. If the people of Bombay didn't like Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then why not go away and leave them to their fate?

But no. As a genuine sādhu, Prabhupāda was merciful. Because he had come to deliver the compassionate message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he had to tolerantly give that message to everyone. People were misguided and were living like animals, only for sense gratification, and by the laws of karma they would suffer in their next life. Seeing this unhappy predicament, Prabhupāda had felt moved to help these fallen souls, even if they were unappreciative.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam also describes a sādhu as suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām: the only desire in his heart is the welfare of all others. Being unbounded by nationalism, he thinks of himself not as Indian or American or even as human being, but as eternal spiritual soul, meant to benefit all living entities.

A sādhu, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes, is ajāta-śatru, because he never creates enemies. Although envious persons may declare themselves a sādhu's enemy, a sādhu behaves as the best friend of everyone, trying to bring everyone to Kṛṣṇa. Because Prabhupāda was trying to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, envious persons would continue to oppose him. But as he sublimely showed in Bombay, "What can be done? We have to tolerate." Thus, even before any foundations were laid for buildings, Prabhupāda had already fully demonstrated all the ornaments of the sādhu. Remaining peaceful (śānta) and dependent on Kṛṣṇa, he had become victorious. And for whoever serves such a great personality, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam states, the door to liberation is open.

SPL 43: Beginning the Temple of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

Beginning the Temple

of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma

= April 1972

Srīla Prabhupāda was meditating on constructing his Krishna-Balaram Mandir. In April of 1972 he asked his disciple Surabhi, who had drawn the plans for the Bombay center, to execute drawings, basing the design on Indian renaissance architecture. Prabhupāda liked the Govindajī temple, located near the original Govindajī temple constructed by Rūpa Gosvāmī. He liked its open courtyard surrounded by many arches and its front steps leading up to the Deity darśana area. He suggested that some features of the temple be incorporated into his temple. Surabhi, with the assistance of a Vṛndāvana architect, executed the plans, and Prabhupāda approved.

This will be the grandest temple in Vṛndavana. Many high-class gentlemen in Delhi who are also devotees will relish the chance to live with us on weekends and it will be for them just like Vaikuntha. You must construct something wonderful. Otherwise it will be a discredit to you American boys. That will absolve the position of America and India. And this Vṛndāvana project is one of the most important of ours in ISKCON.

Although Guru dāsa had been careful to keep in touch with Prabhupāda by mail, he had neglected certain important matters in Vṛndavana, such as digging a well and getting city approval—things Prabhupāda had repeatedly asked for. In the summer of 1972 Prabhupāda wrote,

From the beginning I said I simply wanted a temple built in Vr̥ndavana just like Govindaji's temple. And there have been so many letters, but that has not been done. Never mind, now I like that plan of Surabhi's.

Two weeks later Prabhupāda again wrote Guru dāsa on the same point.

I wanted a temple like Govindaji. Is it so difficult that for the last six months you have consulted so many engineers? Any ordinary engineer could draw up the papers and get it passed. There has been so much unnecessary correspondence.

To build a temple in Vr̥ndāvana should not be so difficult, Prabhupāda thought, and he became impatient with the delays. Concerned that the devotees and architects not make the building too costly, he said that they should go ahead with the plans he had approved, even if the building were to be a little cheaper than in the original plan. He was concerned that a competent disciple oversee the work so that ISKCON didn't get cheated.

As early as April of 1972, Prabhupāda had asked that the Deities in Vr̥ndāvana be Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. "Kṛṣṇa may be black, Balarāma of white, and the pose in the back of the Back to Godhead magazine is very nice." He asked that a sign be put out front announcing, "Shri Krishna Balaram Mandir."

One reason Prabhupāda chose Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as the presiding Deities was that most of the Vr̥ndāvana temples were of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa; ISKCON's temple would be unique in Vr̥ndāvana. Another reason was that the ISKCON land was located in Ramaṇa-reti, an area of forest and soft sands where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had enjoyed Their childhood pastimes five thousand years ago. To celebrate and worship the youthful sports of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in Ramaṇa-reti was fitting.

Although thousands of years had passed since Kṛṣṇa's advent in Vr̥ndāvana, the same atmosphere and many of the same sights and sounds still prevailed. Peacocks ran across the sands or sat on rooftops or in trees. The cooing and chirping of pigeons and cuckoos and the sweep of the parrots' green wings were eternal sounds and sights of the Vr̥ndāvana forest. In Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Prabhupāda had described how Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and Their cowherd friends played in Ramaṇa-reti and similar places.

"My dear friends, just see how this river bank is extremely beautiful because of its pleasing atmosphere. And just see how the blooming lotuses are attracting bees and birds by their aroma. The humming and chirping of the bees in the forest is echoing throughout the beautiful trees in the forest. Also, here the sands are clean and soft. Therefore, this must be considered the best place for our sporting and pastimes."

According to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the playing of the cowherd boys with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as friends in Vr̥ndāvana is the highest spiritual realization, far beyond the ordinary religionist's understanding of God. The Supreme Truth, whom some meditated upon as impersonal Brahman, others worshiped as the Supreme Almighty, and still others considered an ordinary living entity, was the eternal, loving friend of the cowherd boys of Vr̥ndāvana. Only after many, many lifetimes

of pious activities had they become eligible to join in the loving pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in Ramaṇa-reti.

In establishing a temple of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Prabhupāda wanted to offer the peaceful, transcendental atmosphere of Ramaṇa-reti to all people, including visitors from abroad, commuters from Delhi, and his own disciples. Already he had received a letter from a major international travel agency requesting that he provide accommodations for tourists so that the ISKCON guesthouse could be included in official tours of spiritual India. People were always coming to India to tour the holy places; unfortunately most of the places were unauthorized or overrun by cheaters. ISKCON's center, therefore, would be very important. Prabhupāda wrote,

Have a European preaching center, and try to enlist all the tourists and hippies who come to Vṛndavana. Give them nice prasadam and engage them in chanting, cleaning the temple, and reading our books, give them all facility for becoming devotees.

There was another particular significance in Prabhupāda's choosing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as the central object of worship in his Vṛndāvana temple. Lord Balarāma is the first expansion from Lord Kṛṣṇa, and in His incarnation of Saṅkarṣaṇa, He upholds all the universes. The Vaiṣṇavas, therefore, worship Balarāma for spiritual strength. "You can pray to Lord Balarāma," Prabhupāda said, "to help you in your deficiency." As the source of spiritual strength, Lord Balarāma is also known as the original spiritual master.

As in Prabhupāda's other large ISKCON temples, there would be three altars, and beside Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma would stand the Deities of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda. Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and Lord Nityānanda is Lord Balarāma, a fact the Krishna-Balarām Mandir would proclaim to the world. Lord Nityānanda is especially referred to as the kṛpā-avatāra, the form of God most merciful to the fallen conditioned souls. Thus the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda would emphasize distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. Prabhupāda also wanted to install Deities of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara along with Their two attendant gopīs, Lalitā and Viśākhā.

Śrīla Prabhupāda could not possibly stay full-time in Vṛndāvana, and yet whenever he was away, progress slowed. Guru dāsa, the temple president, had little money and little expertise in managing finances. Prabhupāda called him "Damn Cheap Bābu," a name given by Indians to Westerners who think they have won a "damn cheap" bargain, although they are actually being cheated.

Since Prabhupāda did not trust his devotees' spending habits, he arranged for a complicated system whereby he would have to approve all ISKCON Vṛndāvana checks, even while traveling. When Guru dāsa wanted to spend, Tejās, the Delhi temple president, would come to Vṛndāvana and approve the expenses. Then a check would be made out and mailed to Śrīla Prabhupāda for his signature. When the check returned to Delhi, Tejās would add his own signature and give the check to Guru dāsa.

Although Prabhupāda generally preferred not to burden himself with managing his temples, he insisted on supervising all spending in Vṛndāvana, down to the last rupee. But even with such

controls, Guru dāsa would misspend money, taking funds earmarked for construction and using them for other temple purposes—usually getting cheated by the merchants.

After Prabhupāda's 1972 visit during Kārttika, he was away from Vṛndāvana for an entire year, directing things through correspondence. With the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement growing quickly on all continents, he had many places to visit. Still, his three main projects—Bombay, Vṛndāvana, and Māyāpur—were his major subjects of correspondence and his greatest financial investments.

One reason he did not come more often to Vṛndāvana was that Guru dāsa's letters had been very optimistic, promising a temple opening by Janmāṣṭamī 1973. Surabhi was in charge of the construction and knew well that the work was going too slowly, yet Guru dāsa would write to Prabhupāda, painting a picture of imminent completion of the construction and opening of the mandira. Prabhupāda was enlivened to hear the good news, and he held Guru dāsa to his promise, though with reservations.

If you can finish the work by Janmastami next, that would be a very great credit for you, and I shall come from any part of the world just to install the deity. But now you must work very, very hard to make good your promise to me, otherwise I shall be very disappointed and become very, very angry upon you.

Prabhupāda warned the devotees in Vṛndāvana that they would have to work diligently, finishing before the monsoon season arrived in June if they were actually to fulfill their promise.

But anyone visiting the construction site in Vṛndāvana could understand that the building would never be finished in time. The temple area consisted of foundation lines and steel rods. Only three or four devotees were living there, struggling to organize laborers and to obtain funds and building materials. That summer was extremely hot, and each day the devotees were forced to spend the afternoon lying down in their huts, exhausted from the heat. Prices for cement and steel had doubled. Yet Prabhupāda continued to respond to Guru dāsa's glowing reports, encouraging him to continue with determination.

But Prabhupāda could also read between the lines, and he cautioned Guru dāsa, "I simply want to see that the work is being carried on vigorously, and the money shall not be used to pay bad bills. The money should simply be used for construction." Talk of a temple opening by Janmāṣṭamī gradually disappeared, but Prabhupāda did not express his disappointment. Rather, he continued to encourage and push the devotees onward, asking that at least his own room be completed, so that when he visited in October of 1973, he would have a place to stay.

When Prabhupāda arrived, however, his quarters were far from completion, and he had to live for a week in the home of a Vṛndāvana friend. He did not remove Guru dāsa, but he tried to teach him better management and accounting. He also wrote to his India G.B.C. secretary, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, to get more funds for the Vṛndāvana project.

So I have arrived here in Vrindaban, but so far the project is concerned, why the money is so irregular? Tejyas reports that in the past three months you have sent Rs. 5,000/- and since then nothing. How will the project go on?

Inspired by Prabhupāda's presence, the devotees rallied. They held a little festival on the land, erecting a tent and decorating the foundation posts with banana trees and flowers. For several evenings Prabhupāda lectured before a crowd of about fifty local people sitting on folding chairs in between the foundation lines.

Prabhupāda was determined in his desire. He wanted a temple as much as ever, and the small band of disciples in Vṛndāvana were convinced of their mission to erect that temple. They knew they were building a temple not merely as their own local project but as something very important for the whole world. Prabhupāda set the next Janmāṣṭamī, August 1974, as the new grand opening.

Surabhi had considerable architectural and construction experience, but he had never worked with such an ornate building before. He doubted, therefore, whether they could finish in a year's time. Tejās wondered whether they could raise the funds in time. Guru dāsa was becoming more competent, and he assured Prabhupāda that they would meet their deadline.

Subala had wanted to stay in Vṛndāvana, but only on the condition that he be relieved of management, free to chant and wander in the groves. But he had long since departed for the West. Those devotees who remained committed to Vṛndāvana knew that, at least for the present, the real spiritual path in Vṛndāvana was one of hard labor, anxiety, combating the elements, and working as pure instruments in the service of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee.

In February 1974, as Prabhupāda was traveling eastward from Los Angeles, he wrote Guru dāsa that he would like to come to Vṛndāvana as soon as his residential rooms were completed—and he asked when that would be. Guru dāsa consulted Surabhi, who said one month. Trying to be more positive, Guru dāsa invited Prabhupāda to come and move into his new quarters in three weeks, but Śrīla Prabhupāda telegraphed back that he would be coming in two!

At that time Prabhupāda's house had no roof or floor, and only portions of the outer walls. Surabhi began a marathon construction effort and hired two work crews, one for day and one for night. Two weeks nonstop they worked, drastically cutting corners. They plastered and painted simultaneously, and as a result the walls remained wet. A few days before Prabhupāda's arrival they put down a temporary floor: bricks, covered with cow dung, covered with rugs, covered with sheets. The weather was cold, and the house had no heating.

The morning Prabhupāda arrived, the devotees all gathered with him as he sat happily before his desk, praising their achievement. He said if they could keep working like this, they could finish everything before Janmāṣṭamī.

Almost immediately upon his arrival Prabhupāda began to manifest the symptoms of a cold, but he would not hear of moving to another place. "This is my first house," he said. "Now I am going to stay here."

The large brick-and-stone room was simple and austere and remained dark during most of the day, but Prabhupāda considered it his Vṛndāvana residence. Soon local distinguished visitors began calling on him, and he received them warmly, discussing Kṛṣṇa consciousness hour after hour in his room. In the evenings he would lecture there and hold a kīrtana.

Prabhupāda had a problem to face in Vṛndāvana. Guru dāsa had informed him that Mr. S. wanted to take back fifty feet of the donated land, claiming the construction was not going quickly enough and that he had never intended to give the front portion. He was thinking of using it for shops, maybe even a petrol pump. Prabhupāda was alarmed. For Mr. S. to take back the front part of the property would ruin the temple scheme and make a farce of the gift. What good was land without proper access to it?

On further inquiry Prabhupāda learned that Guru dāsa had not yet received the actual deed. Prabhupāda was greatly disturbed, yet he proceeded calmly and intently. Guru dāsa, he said, should immediately secure the deed from the registrar and construct a high brick wall around the property. Prabhupāda's secretary wired Mr. S., who was away from Vṛndāvana: "HARE KRSNA. PRABHUPĀDA NOW IN VRINDABAN UNTIL THE 13TH. NOW SETTLE UP FRONT PIECE AS PROMISED."

Mr. S. wired his reply: "FRONT PART OF LAND WILL BE USED FOR OTHER PURPOSES AS DECIDED EARLIER. LETTER FOLLOWS." Suddenly it seemed that Prabhupāda had another Bombay case on his hands.

Mr. S.'s action, however, confirmed Prabhupāda's urgency for completing the construction. Had the land been already walled and the temple built, there would have been no question of Mr. S.'s taking the land back. Prabhupāda's followers could now see clearly his reasons for pushing them. He had been vigilant, even heavy and critical, but for good reasons. Māyā's opposition to Kṛṣṇa consciousness was always present, so that if the devotees let up for even a moment, they could suffer great losses. The question "Why hurry? Why be so anxious to build a temple right away?" should never have been asked. It was the question of the naive, the lazy. As long as the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement had no temple in Vṛndāvana, the threat would exist that there might never be a temple.

Prabhupāda wrote to a friend in Calcutta,

This statement of K. has given me much concern. He said personally to me that under dictation of Srimate Radharani he has given the land to us in charity. We have invested already lacs of rupees for constructing a temple, and now if he uses the front portion for other purposes there will be great damage to the view of the temple... Kindly see Mr. N. S., brother of K., and settle this up so we can go on in our progressive construction work. Kindly treat this as very urgent.

In Mr. S.'s absence from Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda took the opportunity to speak with Mr. S.'s brothers as well as with Mr. S.'s lawyers. What had been given in the name of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, he informed them, could not be taken back. Mr. S.'s associates agreed, at least for the moment, that Mr. S. had no substantial position. Meanwhile, the laborers were working quickly to build a twelve-foot-high wall around the property.

It was four A.M. Prabhupāda sat in the cold darkness, with a small desk lamp shining before him. Having risen from bed at two and come into his main room to dictate Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam purports, he now sat silently. He wore a wool knit hat pulled over his ears, a sweater, and a gray wool cādar around his shoulders.

On the other side of the double doors sat his servant, peeking in to see what his spiritual master was doing. On Prabhupāda's last visit to the United States, he had acquired a new secretary-servant, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami. Despite the cold, Prabhupāda's new assistant was happy to be in Vṛndāvana and so intimately situated close to his spiritual master.

Prabhupāda rang his bell. The servant jumped up, opened the double doors, and entered the room. In the far corner of the large room, seated at the desk, he saw Prabhupāda, looking grave and mystical, his beautifully intense eyes sparkling. As Satsvarūpa offered obeisances, he thought of his great fortune in being there with his spiritual master. When he sat up, he saw Prabhupāda nod slightly, and he felt that Prabhupāda was acknowledging his servant's good fortune.

Sitting on the floor on the other side of the desk, Satsvarūpa faced Śrīla Prabhupāda. In awe and reverence he tensed, prepared to do whatever Prabhupāda requested, yet fearful that the request might be something he wouldn't know how to do.

"Get the Kṛṣṇa book, Volume Two," Prabhupāda said. His servant ran and got it from the shelf, returned, and again sat down.

"Read the story of King Nṛga," Prabhupāda said. Though terse, Prabhupāda's commands were complete. His servant paused, wondering if there was anything else. He opened the book, then hesitated. "Out loud?" he asked. Prabhupāda nodded, and his servant began to read aloud.

Soon, however, Satsvarūpa became puzzled as to why Prabhupāda was having him do this so early in the morning when he was usually dictating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As Satsvarūpa read aloud, Prabhupāda sat motionless, giving no indication that he was pleased, or even listening. In that silence, Satsvarūpa became very aware of his own voice reading, and he listened intently to the story.

King Nṛga, the story explained, gave many cows in charity to the brāhmaṇas. One day, however, one cow wandered back and entered among King Nṛga's herd, and so the king unknowingly gave it in charity to another brāhmaṇa. But as the new owner was leading the cow away, the former owner returned to claim it. An argument ensued between the two brāhmaṇas. Coming before King Nṛga, they charged that he had taken back a cow previously given in charity—a great sin. The puzzled King Nṛga very humbly offered each brāhmaṇa one hundred thousand cows in exchange for this one cow. Neither accepted, however, since according to Manu's law, a brāhmaṇa's property can't be taken under any condition, even by the government. Consequently, both brāhmaṇas left in anger, and as a result King Nṛga had to take his next birth as a lizard.

As Prabhupāda's servant read on, he suddenly got the feeling that Prabhupāda had asked him to read this story to expose the cheating of his own servant. In a panic, he tried to think of how he

had committed the offense of stealing from his spiritual master. He couldn't think of anything wrong—until he recalled having taken a pair of socks which had been given to Prabhupāda as a gift. Prabhupāda was always receiving gifts wherever he went, and it was his practice, after collecting socks and scarves and so on, to give them to his disciples. Prabhupāda would use only a fraction of the things given to him. So because it was cold in Vṛndāvana, Satsvarūpa, who had no socks, had taken one inexpensive-looking pair that he was sure his spiritual master would never want to use. He had assumed that Prabhupāda would not object, but now his cheating was indirectly exposed.

After the story was completed, Prabhupāda remained silent, as did his servant. “Perhaps Prabhupāda is sleeping,” Satsvarūpa thought, though he dared not say anything or even move. They both sat motionless, Satsvarūpa looking down at the book and sometimes up at Prabhupāda, waiting for an indication.

Five minutes passed. Finally Prabhupāda said, “Now take this chapter and type it up.” His servant acknowledged the instruction and got up to leave. But still it wasn't clear. Why had he read the story, and why type it? Prabhupāda then spoke again. “Now I want to dictate one letter.” Satsvarūpa had a notepad with him, and he sat down and immediately began writing Prabhupāda's words.

The letter was to Mr. S., and Prabhupāda referred to Mr. S.'s donation of the land and to his desire to take back the front fifty feet. He reminded Mr. S. that, according to the original agreement, he had given the entire land with the sanction of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. How could he say that now he was taking it back? Mr. S. should please reconsider what he was proposing. In this connection Prabhupāda was enclosing the story from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam of King Nṛga. Mr. S. should read it and consider the implications.

Prabhupāda's servant felt relieved. But he also felt that his guilt was valid and that he should be wary of becoming too familiar with his spiritual master's possessions. And he had learned another lesson as well: his own viewpoint of Prabhupāda was entirely subjective. Although he had been with Prabhupāda, he had not correctly understood Prabhupāda's thoughts and motives. He felt that perhaps he was not the only disciple who sometimes made that mistake. One may try to comprehend the many aspects of Śrīla Prabhupāda, but one should not expect to understand completely. Even G.B.C. secretaries and other leading devotees who were right with Prabhupāda in his dealings could not know what Prabhupāda was thinking. Satsvarūpa Mahārāja decided that it was best to always follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, and going back to the adjoining room, he began typing the story of King Nṛga.

At sunrise Prabhupāda stepped out of his house onto the dusty lane, and the devotees of ISKCON Vṛndāvana joined him on his morning walk. As he walked he began saying that one of the devotees had complained that the electricity was always going off. The devotee had said that India was advanced in spiritual knowledge and the West in material knowledge and that the two should combine. Prabhupāda agreed. “Yes,” he said, “that is my mission. To combine them.”

Prabhupāda reached the Chhatikara road in front of the property and began walking down the middle of the road in the direction of Delhi. Large nīm trees lined the road. “The material side of

life is also necessary," Prabhupāda continued. "In the West, even for shaving they have a machine. This is very good, but it is also being misused. It is all for the itching sensation, sex, which is insignificant and abominable. The whole intelligence is being employed like the dog's or cat's."

Prabhupāda paused, and a devotee asked, "Prabhupāda, how can we understand that Vṛndāvana is Kṛṣṇa's abode? There seems to be so much contamination in Vṛndāvana."

"This is because your senses are impure," said Prabhupāda. "But when your eyes are smeared with the salve of love, then you can see Vṛndāvana. Don't judge Vṛndāvana by this external manifestation."

As Prabhupāda walked along the road, many persons greeted him and his disciples, calling, "Jaya Rādhē!" "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" Some even stepped out of their shoes and prostrated themselves before Prabhupāda, who returned their respects with folded palms, nodding his head, and saying, "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

The tightly gathered group walking in the cold morning air passed fields, āśramas, and groves. They heard the singing of many varieties of birds: sparrows, parrots, cuckoos, pigeons, and peacocks. Sugarcane stood high and ready for harvest. As Prabhupāda walked farther, the large nīm trees gave way to small thorny acacia trees, and herds of cows and buffalo grazed in the fields. For half an hour Prabhupāda continued. Then, turning, he retraced his route.

On the roadside he passed a man dressed in the simple white cloth of a bābājī, warming himself before a fire of twigs. Prabhupāda said that the Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭakam, by Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, defines the actual qualities of a person in the renounced order. The song glorifies the six Gosvāmīs, who gave up their posts as government ministers and became mendicants, accepting only one cloth and thinking always of Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs.

"Vṛndāvana is the gift of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī," Prabhupāda said. "They wrote many books so poor people could take advantage and become Kṛṣṇa conscious. We see many imitations of Rūpa Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana today. But they should never take the dress of Rūpa Gosvāmī, especially if they cannot give up this cigarette-smoking habit. It was the gift of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī that we should not jump and try to change our garb all of a sudden. We should try to hear of the Absolute Truth from realized souls." Prabhupāda said that especially his disciples living in Vṛndāvana should become gosvāmīs. Whether gṛhasthas or sannyāsīs, they should live simply and austere and engage twenty-four hours in the service of Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda sat in his room talking with Guṇārṇava about finances. "Where are the bills?" Prabhupāda asked.

"I am keeping duplicates, Prabhupāda," Guṇārṇava explained, showing him how he had attached the bills to the vouchers. "Tejās is keeping the originals in Delhi."

"This is just an explanation," Prabhupāda replied. "I am an auditor. I am not A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. Don't you understand? The auditor wants to see the bills, not just your excuses."

Throughout the day, Prabhupāda would call in Guru dāsa, Surabhi, Mr. Lahadi (the engineer), even the contractor, Mr. Alibuchs. Although the contractor was Muhammadan, Prabhupāda requested him, "Please do a nice job, because this is Kṛṣṇa's temple. If you work very nicely, Kṛṣṇa will bless you." Prabhupāda assured him that money would not be a problem. He would arrange that ten thousand dollars a month would come from his temples in America until the construction was finished.

"It will be finished by Janmāṣṭamī?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Yes," Guru dāsa said firmly. "It will be done."

* * *

Māyāpur

March 1974

While traveling from Calcutta to Māyāpur, Prabhupāda stopped as usual at the pleasant, secluded mango grove and, sitting on a straw mat, took a breakfast of fresh fruits. A group of his disciples and his sister, Bhavatārīṇī, were also present, and Prabhupāda saw that everyone received prasādam. He then returned to his car, and the caravan continued to Māyāpur.

As Prabhupāda's car approached the Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir, he was met by a "roadblock" of ISKCON devotees waiting at the spot known as Śrīvāsāṅgana, over two miles from the ISKCON property. Four hundred devotees from America, England, Europe, South America, Australia, India, and other parts of the world sang Hare Kṛṣṇa, following Prabhupāda as he rode slowly toward the Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir.

Prabhupāda smiled. Looking out from the back seat of the car, he recognized many faithful disciples, all hankering for his merciful glance of recognition. The car, surrounded tightly by devotees, inched its way through the gates and up the long drive to the temple. Along the roadside and around the temple buildings, colorful marigolds and tagar were abloom, enhancing Śrīla Prabhupāda's joyous reception.

The temple room was completed, its sparkling marble floor, freshly painted walls, and crystal chandeliers all having been readied just a few days before. After offering obeisances before the resplendent golden forms of Rādhā-Mādhava on the altar, Prabhupāda turned and walked the long temple hall to sit on his vyāsāsana and address this first truly international gathering of disciples. He welcomed them to Māyāpur, acknowledging that on this day, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's prediction had come true. The devotees shouted triumphantly, "Jaya! Jaya, Śrīla Prabhupāda!"

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had written,

Oh, for that day when the fortunate English, French, Russian, German and American people will take up banners, mṛdaṅgas and karatālas and raise kīrtana through their streets and towns. When will that day come?

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's prophecy had come to pass. He had also predicted, "Soon a great saint will come and establish Lord Caitanya's movement throughout the world." That great personality—empowered to create devotees of all races and backgrounds and to rally them together in Māyāpur, thousands of miles from their homes—was Śrīla Prabhupāda. And although he saw himself as an instrument of the ācāryas, his disciples saw him as the personification of Lord Caitanya's and Lord Nityānanda's mercy. As stated in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, yadyapi āmāra guru—caitanyera dāsa/ tathāpi jāniye āmi tānhāra prakāśa: "Although I know that my spiritual master is a servitor of Śrī Caitanya, I know him also as a plenary manifestation of the Lord."

Leaving the temple room, Prabhupāda went upstairs and retired to his room, satisfied that the building was now fulfilling its purpose by giving shelter to hundreds of his spiritual children. He began greeting leading disciples from various parts of the world, hearing the encouraging news of book distribution and dealing with problems. He asked that everyone take advantage of the holy dhāma by maintaining kīrtana in the temple room around the clock, stopping only for scheduled classes in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

The devotees were very happy to be together in the dhāma. Those with experience of India, like Jayapatāka Swami and Acyutānanda Swami, led groups of devotees on parikrama (pilgrimage) to local holy places. This visit to Māyāpur would constitute the first half of the devotees' Indian pilgrimage; after ten days they were scheduled to go to Vṛndāvana.

Almost all of the devotees assembled in Māyāpur preached in areas of the world where the modes of ignorance and passion predominated. Daily they had to mix with materialistic people, and it was inevitable that they would become worn down. This pilgrimage, therefore, was a chance for purification. Although they were not advanced in birth or in knowledge of the Sanskrit Vedas, Prabhupāda had accepted them, and that was their certification as devotees. They were bona fide candidates for understanding the meaning of the dhāma. They would become refreshed by bathing in the Ganges in Māyāpur and the Yamunā in Vṛndāvana, and they would return to their respective centers throughout the world, purified and renewed for more active preaching.

One song by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura described the pilgrims' eligibility to realize the dhāma:

gaurāṅgera saṅgi-gaṇe, nitya-siddha kari' māne,

se yāya vrajendra-suta-pāśa

śrī gauḍa-maṇḍala-bhūmi, yebā jāne cintāmaṇi,

tāra haya vraja-bhūme vāsa

"Those whose intelligence has come to understand that the eternal associates of Vṛndāvana-dhāma are nondifferent from those in Navadvīpa can attain the service of the son of Nanda Mahārāja [Kṛṣṇa]. Such fortunate persons perceive the holy dhāma as an object of service because their transcendental eyes have been opened by the mercy of the eternal perfect associates of Navadvīpa-dhāma. Therefore, those who are enthusiastic realize the touchstone of the holy dhāma of

Navadvīpa through their transcendental eyes. Thereafter, they reside in the holy dhāma of Navadvīpa which they know to be nondifferent than Vṛndāvana and serve in their eternally perfected spiritual bodies."

The devotees' main reason for coming to Māyāpur, however, was to associate with Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was always traveling, and his disciples could only expect to see him briefly from time to time as he passed through their area. To see him in Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana, where they could be with him daily on walks and in the temple, was the most ecstatic part of the festival.

Prabhupāda's happiness to be in Māyāpur was increased many times by the large gathering of his international family. He wanted this. Māyāpur was for the devotees. Prabhupāda even thought that, if possible, all the devotees should stay here permanently and simply go on chanting, although he admitted that it was not practical in terms of world preaching. He derived great satisfaction from sitting in his room above the temple hall and hearing the constant rousing kīrtanas. "Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has said," he remarked, "there is nothing of value in all the fourteen worlds except the chanting of the holy names."

At Prabhupāda's request, his Governing Body Commission members had gathered in Māyāpur. Their purpose was to discuss ISKCON's preaching activities around the world and then to pass resolutions to direct that preaching. This was the first time they had met as a body in Prabhupāda's presence, and he instructed them how to conduct their meeting. They should not simply talk, he said. Rather, someone should present a proposal, which should then be discussed and voted on. All resolutions should be listed in the minutes.

"Chalk out your plans for the year," Prabhupāda said. "And then whatever you decide, do not change it, but carry it out. Then next year you can meet and discuss again." He was not in favor of prolonged meetings, but he was satisfied to see his G.B.C. secretaries seriously confronting all items on the agenda for the sake of a growing Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

One of the main features of the Māyāpur festival was the arrival of advance copies of the recently published volume of the Caitanya-caritāmṛta. The volume contained chapters Seven through Eleven of the Ādi-līlā and included color illustrations by Prabhupāda's disciples. Chapter Nine especially glorified the saṅkīrtana movement begun by Lord Caitanya, and verse after verse ecstatically confirmed the authenticity of Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja describes Navadvīpa-dhāma as the place where Lord Caitanya had planted the seed of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness "tree." In one verse he states, "Thus the branches of the Caitanya tree formed a cluster of society, with great branches covering all the universe." And Śrīla Prabhupāda had written a conclusive one-sentence purport to this verse: "Our International Society for Krishna Consciousness is one of the branches of the Caitanya tree."

Prabhupāda's Caitanya-caritāmṛta translation and commentary was the fruit of the Caitanya tree. It was fully authoritative and paramparā, but never merely academic or technical. Its teachings stressed that Caitanya Mahāprabhu's desire to widely distribute devotional service should be the desire of everyone. It left no doubt about what Prabhupāda expected from the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

The only purpose of the preachers of the saṅkīrtana movement must be to go on preaching without restriction. That is the way in which Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu introduced the saṅkīrtana movement to the world.

This volume also contained one of the most important verses of the Caitanya-caritāmṛta: bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma yāra/ janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upākara, "One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all people." In his purport to this verse, Prabhupāda explained the special piety of the Indians, who were always ready to take part in a saṅkīrtana festival. Unfortunately, the present leaders of India were leading the people away from God, away from distinguishing pious and sinful acts, and away from belief in a next life. The Indians had the special duty of educating the world in Vedic principles.

"If all Indians had taken to this path as advised by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu," Prabhupāda wrote, "India would have given a unique gift to the world, and thus India would have been glorified." Moreover, it was not only the duty of the Indians but the duty of everyone to help the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement: "One should know definitely that the best welfare activity for all of human society is to awaken man's God consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Prabhupāda stayed with his disciples in Māyāpur for a full week, lecturing daily and meeting with smaller groups for many hours. On the day of Gaura-pūrṇimā he went down to the Ganges and took the sacred water on his head, while his men dove off the high bank and swam. The next day he left for Vṛndāvana, where he would again meet his disciples and introduce them to the dhāma.

* * *

Although many of the Western devotees, inexperienced in living and traveling in India, were afflicted with indigestion, dysentery, and even, in some cases, culture shock and homesickness, they nevertheless traveled, a somewhat bedraggled group, from Māyāpur to Calcutta to Delhi, and finally to Vṛndāvana.

Since the Vṛndāvana temple and guesthouse was still mostly a construction site, the devotees had to stay at the nearby Fogel Ashram, while Prabhupāda again took up residence in his newly constructed rooms near the site of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. The devotees would see him regularly on morning walks and during the morning Bhāgavatam class, and he would also come in the evening sometimes to speak under an outdoor pavilion at Fogel Ashram.

Noticing that not many devotees attended his first evening meeting in his room, Prabhupāda inquired and learned that many of them were out visiting Vṛndāvana's famous old temples and other pilgrimage sites, while others were shopping in the bazaar, and still others were sleeping. "Bring them all back," Prabhupāda said, annoyed. "Coming to pilgrimage means to come where the sādhus are. I am here, so why is everyone going elsewhere?" On hearing this, so many devotees came to Prabhupāda's room that they could not all fit.

Prabhupāda began talking about tapasya, austerity. "The tapasvīs in Vṛndāvana go naked," he said, "even in the cold. They are determined not to take birth again for material life." He described how the living entity before birth remains cramped within the womb, a condition much like being tied by the hands and feet and thrown in the ocean. Worms within the mother's body bite the skin of the embryo, and the living entity suffers. Because māyā deludes us into thinking we are happy, Prabhupāda explained, we have to again enter the womb of a mother. And although in one lifetime we may be a wealthy human being, in the next life we may be a bug or hog or dog.

"So this life is for tapasya," Prabhupāda said. "But we cannot execute severe penances in this age. So our penance is to try to reform poor crazy persons. One should take voluntary pains for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa comes to save the fallen souls, so if you help a little, He will be pleased. Kṛṣṇa comes Himself and He sends His devotee and He leaves books, and still we are mad for sense enjoyment. Our penance, therefore, is to try to reform the fallen souls."

Prabhupāda's preaching uplifted his disciples, whose duty was to preach to the citizens of many lands. They had come, at Prabhupāda's bidding, to visit Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana, but their real work was to save the fallen souls of their native countries, and Prabhupāda's preaching filled them with determination.

Later, one of the devotees told Prabhupāda that dealing with the devotees was sometimes more difficult than dealing with the materialists, and he mentioned a well-known problem case, a devotee named Makhana-cora. "That is your penance," Prabhupāda said. "Your penance is to work with Makhana-cora. We should take anxiety. For a sane man to work with a crazy man is not pleasurable, but the service to Kṛṣṇa is pleasurable." Prabhupāda described how he had left his peaceful life in Vṛndāvana to take on so much burden and anxiety for Kṛṣṇa. Just as he had taken a risk by going to America in old age, so his disciples should accept whatever difficulties were required in preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "The work is not pleasurable," Prabhupāda said, "but making so many devotees is pleasurable."

Although the devotees had been visiting the various temples of Vṛndāvana, eager to imbibe the Vṛndāvana spirit, the real nectar came when Prabhupāda, sitting in his room, spoke about Vṛndāvana. "Vṛndāvana is for paramahamsas," he said. "You cannot see Vṛndāvana with viṣaya, or material spirit. The test is how much you have conquered over eating, sleeping, and mating. Don't think you can just come to Vṛndāvana and become a gosvāmī. One who comes to Vṛndāvana with a material spirit will take birth as a dog or a monkey in Vṛndāvana. That is his punishment. But the dogs here are also Vaiṣṇavas.

"People come to Vṛndāvana to give up all material anxieties and family life. So one should not be afraid. He should never mind what is going to happen. There are many devotees in Vṛndāvana who are not disturbed by heat or cold. But another risk in Vṛndāvana is to meet those who talk of the gopīs but are not free from smoking biḍis. They are sahajiyās. We have to see who is a devotee by his personal behavior. If one is seeking money and biḍis and women and talking of the gopīs, then what is his position? Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never talked of the gopīs publicly. The real Vṛndāvana is not to eat prasādam and sleep but to follow the advice of Vṛndāvana-candra [Kṛṣṇa] and broadcast His message. That is His message. That is Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana-dhāma is worshipable. Don't commit an offense here. Take it as cintāmaṇi-dhāma, Kṛṣṇa. Narottama dāsa

Ṭhākura says to see Vṛndāvana is not possible with viṣaya. So we should take the shelter of Gaura-Nitāi, become cleansed of eating, sleeping, and mating. Then you will see Vṛndāvana. Don't commit offenses here. There is a special influence in Vṛndāvana."

Prabhupāda said that Vṛndāvana's spiritual quality was such that devotional service performed here had one hundred times the effect of service performed elsewhere. But an offense in Vṛndāvana also had one hundred times the effect. Ordinary persons, therefore, were advised to visit a holy place like Vṛndāvana for no more than three days; otherwise they would become slack and return to their sinful activities. "Better to come," Prabhupāda said, "become purified, and leave on the fourth day. And the worst offense to Vṛndāvana is to commit illicit sex here. So do not come and play hide-and-seek with Kṛṣṇa. He sees with His eyes, the sun, and He is also in your heart. Kṛṣṇa knows everything. Those who want to be devotees have to be sincere. They shouldn't play tricks, because Kṛṣṇa knows everything. Be sincere with Kṛṣṇa and His representative. Preach the gospel of Bhagavad-gītā as it is. Become a spiritual master."

After his evening lecture, Prabhupāda mentioned how some of the sahajiyās had walked out during his lecture. "They are so advanced," he said, "that they want to hear only of the embracing and kissing of Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa. They take my talks as ordinary." Prabhupāda explained that his process of lecturing was to speak on only one verse per lecture, but that that speaking was the same as Kṛṣṇa's speaking. He said that his own Guru Mahārāja had lectured for three months on the first verse of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and for that he had gained great respect.

Prabhupāda learned one day that one of his disciples had left the company of the ISKCON devotees to live among the bābājīs at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Prabhupāda became angry and sent for the boy to come immediately. When the boy arrived, Prabhupāda went out to see him. Dressed in only a dhotī, Prabhupāda spoke sternly to his disciple, saying that the monkeys of Vṛndāvana also live simply but are interested only in eating and sex. "Don't become a monkey!" Prabhupāda said, trembling as he spoke. "Why don't you come and live with me?"

The boy replied, "The bābājīs have given me some facility to chant."

"You come with me!" Prabhupāda exclaimed. "I will give you facility. But don't become a monkey." The boy surrendered before Prabhupāda's compassionate concern.

Prabhupāda heard from his disciples living in Vṛndāvana that some of the local gosvāmīs had a complaint about him. They had read an article published in Back to Godhead and considered it insulting. The article, written by Prabhupāda's disciple Hayagrīva, contained a statement that gosvāmīs in Vṛndāvana who misbehaved would become hogs and monkeys in Vṛndāvana in their next life. Prabhupāda replied that the statement was accurate. The article, he said, had not specifically referred to the present gosvāmīs but to any gosvāmī who lived sinfully in Vṛndāvana. This was not merely an opinion but was the authoritative conclusion of the original gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

Although Yamunā dāsī lived in Vṛndāvana with her husband, Guru dāsa, Prabhupāda rarely saw her. So one day he sent for her and inquired why she was not coming to hear him and serve him. Yamunā admitted that she was afraid because Prabhupāda seemed to be in a chastising mood of

late. (She was referring to Prabhupāda's insistence and pushing to get the Vṛndāvana temple built.) Prabhupāda said that only by his pushing was the temple being built. But Yamunā again confessed her fear of Prabhupāda's anger.

"You may be afraid of your spiritual master," Prabhupāda said, "but that doesn't mean you shouldn't come and see him." He then narrated the story of how Lord Balarāma had once forced the River Yamunā to come before Him. As he spoke, all the devotees present became aware that Prabhupāda was not only telling the līlā of Lord Balarāma's frightening the River Yamunā, but he was also speaking indirectly about his disciple Yamunā. Absorbed in the pastimes of Lord Balarāma, Prabhupāda described how the Lord, intoxicated from drinking honey, had threatened the River Yamunā, forcing her to come. But when the Yamunā did not come, Lord Balarāma had cut into the earth with His plow, forcing her to flow to Him. "In this way," Prabhupāda said, "I will drag you to come and see me." Yamunā dāsī agreed to stop her foolish reluctance and come and cook for her spiritual master.

Although the afternoons were warm in Vṛndāvana, the early mornings were chilly. Dressed in a sweater, a wool cādar, and a fuzzy wool cap that buttoned under his chin, Prabhupāda led his disciples on a pre-dawn walk along Chhatikara Road. With the ISKCON leaders and sannyāsīs staying close to catch his words, he walked and talked in Vṛndāvana. His walks were so long that most of the devotees became tired, and some joked that Prabhupāda was going to walk all the way back to Delhi. When the sun rose, gradually the air would begin to warm.

Some of the devotees had expected that in Vṛndāvana Prabhupāda would talk more about the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and about Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs and that Prabhupāda himself would want to see the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. But Prabhupāda seemed far more concerned to hear of the preaching of his disciples or to discuss the construction of the Krishna-Balarām Mandir. Often when devotees raised the topic of Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda would criticize the cheating of certain Vṛn dāvana bābājīs and the corruption within Vṛndāvana. Or he would speak of the special vision required before one could properly see Vṛndāvana. He said Vṛndāvana was wherever a pure devotee lived. And he stressed that the devotees' main business was to go out of Vṛndāvana and preach.

As they walked along the road, the main traffic was pedestrians, workers carrying milk on bicycles, or men riding on bullock carts; only occasionally an automobile would speed by, its horn honking. Almost every person who approached would respectfully greet Prabhupāda with "Jaya Rādhē!" or "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" Or they would hold up their hands or bow their heads and say namas te. One young man driving a bicycle ricksha approached from the opposite direction and, just before reaching Prabhupāda, stopped his ricksha, got down, stepped out of his shoes, and prostrated himself on the road. Prabhupāda smiled and said, "Very good boy."

Prabhupāda paused. "This is Vṛndāvana," he said. The simple habit of the ordinary people in Vṛndāvana to offer respect to a saintly person was, to Prabhupāda, an expression of Vṛndāvana's essence. Vṛndāvana was one of the few remaining places in India where even a common man would chant the name of Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa as he passed by on the road. To fully understand this extraordinary phenomenon was to understand Vṛndāvana.

One devotee asked Prabhupāda that if so many residents of Vṛndāvana were fallen souls, then what was the meaning of the statement that to be born in Vṛndāvana was to be liberated? "It says in the Kṛṣṇa book," the devotee said, "that the people in Vṛndāvana don't need a spiritual master. Kṛṣṇa is their spiritual master."

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, "they have an excellent spiritual master. But one may have a spiritual master and not obey him. Then what is his position? So they are fallen who do nonsense things in Vṛndāvana. But their fortune is also there—that they are born in Vṛndāvana. But they misuse that fortune."

The land was very dry. Prabhupāda said that Vṛndāvana was becoming like a desert and would become more so in the future. He said this was because of impiety. "In the West," he said, "I see in America, Germany, there is so much green. But not here."

The devotees then questioned Prabhupāda. "Wasn't the West more impious than Vṛndāvana?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda said. "I came to you in the West, and you did not know anything about Kṛṣṇa. You did not even know that these things were bad—meat-eating and illicit sex. But when I told you to stop, you did it. But this is Kṛṣṇa's land, Vṛndāvana, and they are doing these things here. Therefore it is even worse. And they are being punished directly by Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda's morning walks in Vṛndāvana were as exciting and enlightening as his formal lectures. On two consecutive morning walks, he outlined a comprehensive plan for starting an ISKCON varṇāśrama college. Bhagavad-gītā explains how society should be divided into four orders, according to a person's nature and occupation. Prabhupāda said that although the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement were above the social divisions—brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra—they should teach others by acting perfectly within these divisions. Not everyone would become a brāhmaṇa, but everyone could attain the same perfection by doing his particular duty—for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. "We will teach military art," said Prabhupāda, to the amazement of his disciples. "Soldiers will wear tilaka and march, saying, 'Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa.' They can march with military band and fight."

To Prabhupāda, establishing varṇāśrama-dharma did not seem difficult. ISKCON should begin by starting a college based on the varṇāśrama conception. "There should be no unemployment," Prabhupāda said. "We will say, 'Why are you sitting idly? Come onto the field. Take this plow. Take this bull. Go on working. Why are you sitting idly?' This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Nobody should be allowed to sit down and sleep. They must find out some employment. Either work as a brāhmaṇa, or as a kṣatriya, or as a vaiśya. Why should there be unemployment?"

"Just as this body is working—that means the leg is working, the hand, the brain, the belly. So why should there be unemployment? You stop this unemployment—you will see the whole world is peaceful. There will be no complaint. They will be happily chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Just like this field here. No one is working it. They have all gone to the cities to work in the factory. It is a condemned civilization."

On a morning walk near the end of the Vṛndāvana festival one of the devotees mentioned that the festival was almost over and that the devotees would be going back to their centers. "Yes," said Prabhupāda, and he stopped walking. "Yes, that is our real business—to go and preach."

As the devotees were making travel arrangements for Delhi and onward, Girirāja arrived in Vṛndāvana with upsetting news from Bombay. The municipality of Bombay had denied them permission to begin construction of a temple. According to Girirāja, two permissions were required: permission to build according to rules and regulations and a No-Objection Certificate from the police commissioner. In issuing the No-Objection Certificate the police must consider two points: whether the temple would create a traffic problem and whether the presence of a temple would cause community or religious tensions. The municipality had been delaying their permission, saying they first required an NOC from the police. And the police had been saying that they needed the sanction of the municipality before they would consider giving the NOC. Girirāja had been pursuing this bureaucratic matter, but now a commissioner from the police had written a letter flatly refusing to give an NOC. According to the commissioner, the kīrtana in the temple would produce a "nuisance."

The report from Girirāja deeply disturbed Śrīla Prabhupāda. "You should immediately object," he told Girirāja on his walk the next morning, "that the government is completely unqualified. The pure devotees are always engaged in kīrtana, and the government calls it a nuisance. He could at least be a gentleman and say that the sound should not be amplified while people are trying to take rest. But instead he has said the kīrtana is simply a nuisance." Prabhupāda said that there were many learned persons in Bombay, and they also would not stand for this judgment.

"You have to organize all the Vaiṣṇavas," Prabhupāda continued. "In the Bhagavad-gītā it is said, *satataṁ kīrtayanto mām*: one has to chant 'Kṛṣṇa' always. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*. And this rascal is saying 'bhajana is nuisance'? Hmm? Is it not possible to invoke an agitation against this? What right has he got to say 'nuisance'? He could have spoken in sweet language that, 'The bhajana may be very good for the devotees, but it creates disturbance to the others. Therefore we cannot allow.' Say like that. But they cannot still stop bhajana. But his remark is that the bhajana is nuisance! Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is the culture of India. We must make propaganda and organize kīrtana parties and fight this."

One of the G.B.C. men proposed that instead of going back to the West some of the devotees stay, go to Bombay, and hold massive protests. At first Prabhupāda approved this spirit, likening it to Lord Caitanya's protest against the Kazi, who had stopped the saṅkīrtana movement in Navadvīpa. But on reflecting, he decided it would not be wise to fight with the government. The devotees could not hope to win such a fight, nor would the people appreciate it. Prabhupāda suggested the devotees hold massive kīrtana programs and preach positively to the people of Bombay, convincing them of the value of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "When the people of Bombay are convinced of the importance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness," Prabhupāda said, "they will see that the temple is built."

In an urgent mood, Śrīla Prabhupāda left Vṛndāvana for Bombay. His last instruction to Guru dāsa and the others in Vṛndāvana: "An ideal gosvāmī should remain here to challenge any false gosvāmīs. But if you also become false, then you cannot challenge."

* * *

Bombay

March 20, 1974

Disciples and ISKCON life members continued to discuss with Śrīla Prabhupāda about confronting the police commissioner's refusal to grant ISKCON permission to build a temple at Hare Krishna Land. Ironically, ISKCON's property was bordered on one side by a large cinema hall, and every evening, both before and after the movie, a long line of traffic would form. The honking horns and the hundreds of pedestrians coming and going created much noise and congestion. If the neighborhood and government could tolerate a cinema, then how, without prejudice, could they call the Kṛṣṇa kīrtanas a nuisance?

Although addressing the specific issue of government permission, Śrīla Prabhupāda also preached on the greater principle of how governments in Kali-yuga restrict religious life. "The government policy," he said, "is that religion is an opiate of the people. They think religion is just a sentiment. They want to open slaughterhouses and kill these mischief, loitering cows. Their conclusion is that religion has no value. Therefore, their decision is to not encourage these temples and this bhajana. From their point of view it is useless."

Some of Prabhupāda's Bombay friends suggested he work through the Jan-Sangh political party, which supported Hinduism, and thus form a strong political coalition. But Śrīla Prabhupāda was more concerned to use this opportunity for preaching. "I suggest that we make vigorous propaganda," he said. "Hold meetings in big halls so that the public may understand, at least, that this movement is very important. Let there be advertisements that we will speak on different subject matters, and then I will come and speak."

"In that meeting, make a nice gentleman the president. Create public opinion so that they will come and sign, 'Yes, here must be one temple.' We will prove from śāstric evidence. As it is stated in Bhagavad-gītā, *catur-vidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukr̥tino 'rjuna*. This word bhajana from bhajante is used with reference to the very pious men, *sukr̥tinaḥ*. The opposite kind of man is *duṣkr̥tinaḥ*, the miscreants. So bhajana is for the pious man, as recommended in the Bhagavad-gītā. And Bhagavad-gītā is held in great estimation all over the world. And yet he has accused bhajana as nuisance? How rascal and ignorant! We have to make it clear that bhajana is so important. Bhagavad-gītā is meant for solution of all material problems, but the people of India are not accepting it.

"My disciples can also speak and say, 'You please come with us. We are foreigners, but we know Kṛṣṇa is not for this or that. So why are you Indians lacking? You accept your culture. We have taken to Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa says that simply by kīrtana one becomes free from all contamination. So why not join with us? What is the wrong there? It is stated in your śāstra, and we have adopted it. And we are feeling better. So why you are so callous, you educated youth and gentlemen?' This kind of propaganda has to be made."

Śrīla Prabhupāda had abandoned the idea of direct political agitation, but he continued to speak against the police commissioner's decision and to deliberate on overcoming it. He considered the matter from all possible angles, pro and con. At one point he said that if they could not get sanction to build a temple, then they should build a hotel. "I am trying to get sanction," he said. "If you don't give permission—then hotel."

"Build a hotel in the front and a temple in the rear," suggested Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami.

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. And he instructed his men further on dealing with opposition. As with the struggle to acquire the land, the present struggle also threatened to become a long legal battle. Prabhupāda remained always transcendental, however, even while fighting. And he maintained his normal activities in Bombay, enjoying the mild tropical climate.

Although ISKCON owned a number of tenement buildings on the Juhu land, the devotees had not been able to use a single one, since all were occupied. But recently when tenants had vacated one of the apartments, the devotees had prepared it for Prabhupāda. It was a modest place, two small rooms with a little kitchen, but now for the first time Prabhupāda had his own residence at Hare Krishna Land.

Prabhupāda liked to sit on the narrow veranda outside his apartment and take his massage in the sun. Surveying the Juhu land, with its many tall coconut trees, their long palm leaves rustling pleasantly in the breeze, Prabhupāda said Hare Krishna Land was a paradise. The devotees were happy.

One day during his massage Prabhupāda saw that the contractors, whom he had allowed to come and take coconuts for a set price, were also taking away the leaves to sell in the marketplace. Leaping to his feet, Prabhupāda called from the veranda, "Caityaguru!" Soon the devotee in charge of grounds management appeared before Prabhupāda. "I cannot close my eyes!" Prabhupāda said. "No one else sees these things! You are being cheated!"

Every morning several Indian gentlemen would join Prabhupāda as he walked along Juhu Beach. Whenever Prabhupāda would criticize so-called great political and spiritual leaders of India, exposing their poor understanding of Bhagavad-gītā, these men would become disturbed. Similarly, Prabhupāda's disciples became disturbed to hear these men argue with Prabhupāda.

One day when Prabhupāda criticized a favorite hero, a certain doctor argued back, criticizing Prabhupāda's statement that the Absolute Truth was Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The doctor and others asserted that the Absolute Truth was many things and that ultimately everything was one. The devotees could barely restrain themselves, but still Prabhupāda always treated these men as his friends.

Early the next morning in his room, however, Prabhupāda told his disciples that these men were actually Māyāvādīs. "We will now have a program," he said, "where we will walk on the beach, but we will only chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. If they want to talk, we will just chant, and we will all chant only. If they wish to, they can walk with us."

"Prabhupāda," a devotee said, "they will be restless if we do that."

"Even if they don't chant," said Prabhupāda, "if they only hear, it will be beneficial for them. Māyāvādī philosophy is very dangerous. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that whoever hears it is doomed."

A devotee asked why a Māyāvādī would disguise himself as a kṛṣṇa-bhakta. They do it, Prabhupāda said, to get popular reception for being liberal to all. But if a woman says that she is very liberal and accepts any man, that may seem to be a liberal proposal, but it is not good. "We will read the Kṛṣṇa book on the walk," Prabhupāda said. "I am walking with my disciples. If these men like, they can join and hear. But if they want to ask questions, they must accept the guru's answer without argument. Is that all right?"

The next morning, although the usual challengers did not join the walk, Prabhupāda had Girirāja read aloud from the Kṛṣṇa book. Suddenly, Prabhupāda sighted the familiar group of speculators approaching from the opposite direction. But as they drew closer, they purposely turned aside so as to avoid Prabhupāda. One of them came over, however, and, representing the entire group, informed Prabhupāda they were not going to walk with him any more; they had met and decided that their conversations with him created too much argument and criticism. "India has many saints," the man added.

"I am the policeman," Prabhupāda said, "and I have to catch the thief." After a few days, the same group rejoined Prabhupāda on his walk, and the discussions continued as before. Some of Prabhupāda's disciples remained disturbed, but Prabhupāda was jolly, correcting his friends like an older brother, teaching them pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda would take a breakfast of fruit and nuts. Around eleven A.M. he would sit on the veranda in his gamchā while his servant massaged him with mustard oil. During the massage, Prabhupāda would often speak with one or two of his Bombay devotees, giving them pertinent instructions. After lunch he would rest an hour or two and, on arising, take a glass of fresh coconut water or sugarcane juice. In the evening he would meet guests and then around ten P.M. take rest. At one A.M. he would rise and sit at his desk, beneath a tentlike covering of mosquito netting, and dictate his translations and purports to Caitanya-caritāmṛta until time for his morning walk.

Several times a day, Prabhupāda would call for Girirāja and other Bombay managers to confer on the latest strategy in securing permission to build the temple. When Prabhupāda's Bombay friends would visit, they would often find him on the roof of the tenement, sitting on white cotton sheeting and leaning on white bolsters, preaching the philosophy of Bhagavad-gītā by the hour. He would ask his visitors to help him solidly establish Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Bombay.

One day during the massage Prabhupāda confided to his servant, "Most men are retired at my age. I do not want to manage anymore. I just want to do some writing." Prabhupāda asked if there was some place in the world he could go for six months, a place where he would be all alone, where no one would come to disturb him, and where he would not get any mail.

Prabhupāda's servant suggested Tehran. Prabhupāda considered it, then suggested New Vrindaban. He spoke of Mahatma Gandhi, who could not even sleep at night because people were always after him, even though he traveled incognito.

That very day a letter came from Bhagavān in Paris, inviting Prabhupāda to tour his ISKCON centers in Europe. Immediately Prabhupāda was enlivened at this invitation. He said he would go.

"But earlier today," his servant said, "you wanted to go away and be alone."

Prabhupāda laughed. "That will not be possible for me in this lifetime. Better I keep traveling and die on the battlefield. For a warrior, it is glorious to die on the battlefield. Is it not?"

Traveling around the world once or twice a year had become Prabhupāda's routine. In describing his own spiritual master, he had written, "Hindus are not allowed to cross the ocean, but you send your devotees overseas to preach." The injunction for Hindus not to cross the ocean was to protect them from leaving the pious land of India, since so many Indians gave up their culture when they went abroad. When Prabhupāda had been a small child, one of his uncles had suggested he one day go to London and become a lawyer, but Prabhupāda's father had protested; he did not want his son to be exposed to the sinful ways of the West. Years later Prabhupāda had gone to London, as a preacher, to change the ways of the sinful. For this reason the Vaiṣṇava should travel.

Just before starting his European tour, Prabhupāda explained to several devotees in his room that they also should travel and preach. He said they should do so while they were young, and then when they were old and matured in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they could go to Māyāpur, retire, and simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. "Of course, for myself," Prabhupāda added, "I'm not so mature."

The devotees were silent a moment, but then one ventured, "But Śrīla Prabhupāda, if you say that you're not mature, then how can we ever think that we are old or mature enough to retire?" Prabhupāda smiled and said that they would have to decide for themselves. But he was not mature enough.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami said, "Then we also will never become so mature that we can retire."

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April 18

Before going to Europe, Prabhupāda responded to an invitation from his devotees in South India to attend a three-day paṇḍāl festival in Hyderabad. No sooner did he arrive at the airport in Hyderabad, however, than a group of reporters asked him for a press conference.

Prabhupāda consented, and a reporter opened with a technical philosophical question, inquiring whether Prabhupāda's philosophy was advaita or dvaita. South India was so steeped in the ancient philosophical debate between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śāṅkarites that here an ordinary news reporter was concerned with comparative philosophies.

Prabhupāda scoffed at the question. "What is the point of discussing such things," he challenged "—whether one is dvaita or advaita? Kṛṣṇa says, *annād bhavanti bhūtāni*. Anna means "grains." The people have no grains. Grains are produced from the rains, and rains from sacrifice. So perform sacrifice. You have to divide the society into four orders. You may be dvaita or advaita, but you need grains."

Prabhupāda's secretary wrote to Bhagavān in Paris, keeping him informed of Prabhupāda's location and schedule.

You can contact us here until the 29th or 30th of April after which we will be back in Bombay. Your idea for festivals sounds nice. Here they had a three-day pandal. Last night about a thousand people came, sat very silently through his whole lecture, and then pressed forward to receive blessings from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Devotees had the Deities on stage and a vyasasana and lots of prasadam for the guests.

April 25

From Hyderabad Śrīla Prabhupāda flew to Tirupati. There in mountainous Tirumala stands the richest temple in India, where a Deity of Viṣṇu known as Bālajī resides.

The temple managers respectfully welcomed Śrīla Prabhupāda and his party, providing them with two cottages on the mountainside. According to the temple policy, people usually have to wait in a long line before seeing the Deity—since fifteen thousand people enter the temple daily—and they are given only a brief darśana. Non-Hindus are usually not allowed. But Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples received the special honor of a private darśana of Bālajī.

At the end of a long inner sanctum, its entrance guarded by two large figures of Jaya and Vijaya, the gatekeepers of Vaikuṇṭha, the Deity was enthroned. The only light in the inner sanctum came from flaming torches affixed to the walls or held by the pūjārīs. When approaching the Deity in the hallway, many pilgrims would traditionally call out, "Govinda!" But as Prabhupāda entered, he sang, "Govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi."

Later in his cottage Prabhupāda remarked that the millions of people going to see Bālajī were proof that the masses are still attracted to God, despite government propaganda. Although most people may go to the Lord for alleviating material distress or for getting money, still they called out the holy name, "Govinda!"

A devotee asked Prabhupāda why the Deity was called Bālajī. "Bāla jī," Prabhupāda said, "means 'child'—Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd boy, not in His Vaikuṇṭha aspect."

Prabhupāda was pleased to stay in the cottage and take the Deity's prasādam. He suggested that in New Vrindaban they build cottages like this and that ISKCON build temples like the temple of Bālajī, with its gold dome and extensive facility for visitors.

One day an official of the Tirupati temple, while visiting Prabhupāda, mentioned that their collection was about forty lakhs of rupees per month. Prabhupāda inquired how the temple's

income was being spent. When the priest indicated that most of the money went for renovation of the buildings, Prabhupāda replied that temple renovation was good, but propagating the message of Kṛṣṇa all over the world was better. "Bālajī is Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda said. "His message should be spread. He descended as Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach us."

Prabhupāda told the priest of how so many old churches in London were not being used. "How will the spirit of the temple be maintained without preaching?" Prabhupāda asked. The priest then boasted that they were building another temple and installing pañcopāsana (five deities recommended for worship by the impersonalist Śaṅkarācārya). Prabhupāda was surprised. "Your leader is Rāmānuja," he said. "He never recommended pañcopāsana!"

For the two days in Tirupati, Prabhupāda went three or four times daily to see the Deity of Bālajī. And whenever he went, the pūjārīs would clear the inner sanctum of all other visitors and allow him a private darśana for as long as he liked, standing in the torchlight before the mystical, bejeweled form of Bālajī.

* * *

Bombay

April 29

Although in a few days Prabhupāda would be leaving for Rome, a problem now faced him and the management of his Indian projects. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami was requesting that Prabhupāda allow him to go to America; after four years of management in India, he was eager to try a different kind of preaching. His Godbrother-friend Viṣṇujana Swami had pleased Prabhupāda with his bus-touring in America and had convinced Tamāla Kṛṣṇa that this was the most opportune preaching. Śrīla Prabhupāda had accepted the proposal, although reluctantly. Certainly it would be good for the preaching in America, and it would be good for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. But what about India? Once again Prabhupāda was faced with the fact that the only manager for ISKCON in India was himself.

Carefully he reviewed a recent report of the spending and accounts in Māyāpur. Concerned that all money be handled very carefully and spent exactly for the purpose it was intended, he had written to Jayapatāka Swami,

Money for the land must be spent for land purchase; if I send money for constructing of a kitchen it must be spent for that.

Also, if you purchase land it must be properly utilized... And if you actually produce some grains and vegetables, then where is the necessity for further money for maintenance. For maintenance we require 100 rupees per head without any risk for purchasing lands and cultivating the same. I understand there are only 20 men there at present, so utmost 2,000 rupees is necessary for maintenance. I am not competent to understand everything concerning what you plan to do, but that is my rough estimate.

You have tried to explain by long letter which I have not gone through yet. In the meantime go on the above principle: money spent must be used for that purpose intended. That will keep it very clear.

From a previous letter from Śrīla Prabhupāda, Bhavānanda and Jayapatāka had become a little despondent, thinking that they may have displeased their spiritual master. But Prabhupāda reassured them,

I know you are working hard and sincerely. I have no business to criticize but as head of the institution or your spiritual master, it is my duty to find out your faults. Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu presented Himself as faulty before His spiritual master. To remain faulty before the spiritual master is a good qualification so he is subjected to rectification. But if one thinks he is all perfect then there is no scope for rectification. Don't be sorry when I find fault. That is my primary duty. Canakya pandit says one must find fault with disciples and sons, it is good for them.

Prabhupāda also scrutinized the finances in Vṛndāvana, where Guru dāsa was president and Tejās, in Delhi, was financial supervisor. Reviewing Tejās's latest request, Prabhupāda wrote back,

I am enclosing the list of checks requested by you by Registered post except I am not sending one check for Rs 3,000 for Deity clothes to be paid to the tailor Lalit Prasad of Vrindaban. Deity paraphernalia is supposed to be collected separately by Gurudasa and Yamuna, not come out of the construction fund as you have requested. Besides, I have advised Gurudas not to pay any tailor but to make clothes by our own devotees for the deities.

Prabhupāda also found a serious inconsistency in the accounting, which he pointed out to Tejās for correction.

According to my check book, after writing the last check for Rs 17,6000.00 there is a balance of only Rs. 18,745.81. But you are indicating a balance of Rs. 100,313.64. Where is the difference? Send me a complete statement of account.

Guru dāsa and Tejās had assured Prabhupāda that the Krishna-Balaram Mandir would be ready to open by July 1974. Prabhupāda designed the invitation cards himself and asked that they be printed and sent to important persons.

The founder-acarya and the members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness requests the pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. 's company to visit the installation ceremony of the Krishna-Balarama temple from August 8 to 10 and accept prasadam.

Guru dasa AdhikaryA. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Local President-Founder-Acarya

Surabhi dasa Adhikary

Secretary

With only three months left, Prabhupāda's plans were to travel from May through July. Giving permission for transferring funds from Delhi to Vṛndāvana, he left. He would return in three months for the grand opening.

SPL 44: Let There Be a Temple

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Let There Be a Temple

Srīla Prabhupāda's first two stops in Europe were Rome and Geneva. In both places devotees had arranged many outside speaking engagements as well as meetings with important guests in Prabhupāda's room. The Rome temple was a small house at a busy intersection near Piazza Lodi. Traffic was relentless, its noise penetrating into Prabhupāda's quarters within the temple building. "I hope the noise of the traffic doesn't bother you too much," Dhanañjaya, the temple president, apologized.

"No," Prabhupāda replied, "this sound is very pleasing. It means this is a very important part of Rome. This is a very good location."

At the Villa Borghese, in a hotel hall built to seat five hundred people, Prabhupāda spoke before a crowd of more than one thousand. Prabhupāda was pleased by the enthusiastic gathering of Italians, who behaved as if coming to receive the blessings of the Pope. They were pious, but they had not been taught properly how to engage in the Lord's service. This, he said, was the one defect. Although the devotees had arranged a meeting between Prabhupāda and the Pope, the Pope was ill, so Prabhupāda met with Cardinal Pignedoli, who was in charge of non-Christian liaisons.

In flying to Geneva, Prabhupāda and his secretaries viewed the snow-covered Alps. "This is a very dangerous spot," Prabhupāda remarked as the plane flew above the alpine peaks. "Many planes have crashed here."

In Geneva the mayor offered Prabhupāda an official reception. Everything went smoothly, according to diplomatic protocol. Afterward, the mayor asked frankly, "If everyone became like you are saying, wouldn't the economy be threatened?"

Prabhupāda said no. And he quoted the same verse he had given to press reporters in Hyderabad: *annād bhavanti bhūtāni*. Grains are produced by rains, which are produced by sacrifice to Viṣṇu. Prabhupāda proposed that if men cultivated their own land and kept cows, they would have no economic problems. Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees could work in all ways of life within society; in fact, they could teach how to organize society according to God conscious principles.

While returning to the temple, Prabhupāda asked, "Were my answers all right?" One of the devotees replied that he thought the mayor considered the devotees beggars. "Therefore," Prabhupāda said, "I told him about tilling the land. We are not beggars. We are giving the highest

knowledge. I gave him a copy of Bhagavad-gītā, the highest knowledge. He could not give us anything. So who is the beggar?"

Prabhupāda accepted an invitation in Geneva to speak at the World Health Organization of the United Nations. He also met at the temple with Indologist Jean Hurbert and with several scientists and professors.

One of Prabhupāda's leading disciples, Karandhara, came to visit him in Geneva. Karandhara had left the movement four months before, being unable to follow strictly the four regulative principles. Up to that time he had been the leading manager of ISKCON in the United States, and Prabhupāda had depended heavily on him to deal with his Dai Nippon printers, to coordinate book distribution, and to collect funds from all the temples in the U.S. Since leaving, Karandhara had felt great remorse, had had a change of heart, and had telegraphed Prabhupāda that he wanted to come and surrender at his lotus feet once again. Śrīla Prabhupāda had welcomed him back, and Karandhara had flown immediately to Geneva.

After speaking for a few hours with Karandhara, Prabhupāda decided he would be just the man to take up the heavy responsibilities of G.B.C. of India. He should make his headquarters in Bombay and help the devotees there get the No-Objection Certificate. It was a bold move for Prabhupāda, based on trust in his disciple and on the immediate need for Kṛṣṇa conscious leadership in India. He had his secretary immediately type a letter to the leaders of the temples in Hyderabad, Bombay, Calcutta, Māyāpur, Delhi, and Vṛndāvana, authorizing Karandhara's appointment as the new Governing Body Commissioner for India. "It is a great relief for me," wrote Prabhupāda. "Please give him all cooperation and work together for advancement of our mission to make the people of India Kṛṣṇa conscious."

Paris

June 8

Twenty-five hundred people in the audience as well as fifty devotees onstage awaited Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance at La Salle Pleyel in Paris. After kīrtana, Prabhupāda began his lecture by having a devotee read in the Bible from the Gospel of St. John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." Prabhupāda then spoke on the power of the holy name as transcendental sound.

Many persons in the crowd were student radicals, who specifically came to cause trouble. And Śrīla Prabhupāda gave an analogy that agitated them, comparing the conditioned soul's existence in the material world to a citizen's punishment for breaking the laws of the state. As soon as Prabhupāda said that disobedient citizens would be punished, the students began to boo and yell. He was speaking in English, and his disciple Jyotirmayī-devī dāsī was translating each line over the microphone. When the students began shouting, Prabhupāda turned to Jyotirmayī and asked, "What are they saying?"

"They don't like the example you have given," she replied, "because they don't like the government here."

Śrīla Prabhupāda then spoke back to the challengers, "You may not like it, but the fact of the matter is that if you break the laws you will be punished." He was speaking of the absolute law of karma, but the student radicals took it politically. They continued shouting at Prabhupāda. One man jumped up and shouted loudly in French, "You may be speaking spiritual things, but one thing I would never do is sit on a throne and demand that people bow down to my feet!" At these words the audience began applauding and whistling and chanting the words "Par terre! Par terre! Par terre!" Prabhupāda again asked for a translation. Jyotirmayī told him they were shouting, "Get down!"

Returning the challenge, Prabhupāda spoke strongly into the microphone: "I could speak to you from the floor also, but that does not mean you would understand any better. If you know the science of God consciousness, then you also can sit on the vyāsāsana, and they will bow down at your feet."

Prabhupāda's strong reply brought silence to the hall, as if his answer had satisfied the challengers. Suddenly a black man jumped up on the stage and addressed himself to the theater audience. He began by speaking in defense of Prabhupāda and the devotees, but then he began speaking against them. Finally he began speaking incoherently, and Prabhupāda turned to his disciples onstage and said, "All right, have kīrtana." The devotees rose with drums and karatālas and began a rousing kīrtana. Most of the people in attendance joined also, and the protests were drowned out.

After this tumultuous scene, while riding back to the temple, Prabhupāda said that in the future they should not give him a vyāsāsana to sit on before public audiences; in the future they should give him a simple cushion to sit on. He also doubted the value of explaining philosophy to such large audiences. For the balance of his stay in Paris he spoke to smaller groups who were actually interested to hear him.

Frankfurt

June 18

When Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived, Hamsadūta and a large group of devotees accompanied him in a procession of twenty cars and vans to the outskirts of the city to the ISKCON center, Schloss Rettershof, a castle on a hill. "My heart becomes engaddened when I hear a mṛdaṅga in a German village," Śrīla Prabhupāda said.

The devotees showed Prabhupāda the Schloss. The central room was a large ground-floor hall with a ceiling two stories high. A second-floor gallery, overlooking the hall, led to Prabhupāda's quarters. While Śrīla Prabhupāda was in his room, the assembled devotees from centers all over Germany and from Amsterdam gathered downstairs, where they held a wildly enthusiastic kīrtana. After half an hour Hamsadūta appeared at the railing and motioned to the devotees to come up to Prabhupāda's room.

Somehow the devotees managed to squeeze into Prabhupāda's quarters or to at least stand in the hallway and watch, as Prabhupāda sat, relaxed, speaking informally. "I worked hard my whole life,"

he said. "I never liked to sit idle. So devotional service means to be always engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. Not like the servants in Calcutta. They get an order, and then they go to Dalhousie Park and sleep all day. Then when they come back late, the master asks them, 'Where have you been all day?' And they reply, 'I was busy working for you.' Not like that, you see?"

Prabhupāda laughed, and all the devotees also began laughing, although most of them understood very little English. Prabhupāda then quoted Lord Caitanya's prophecy that His name would be heard in every town and village. The devotees' chanting in the villages of Germany, he said, was fulfilling that prediction.

"But unfortunately," he added, "people object, just like the man who is being saved from danger." He gave the example of a man on a roof flying a kite. When another man, seeing him about to walk off the roof, called out to him, "Look out, you're in danger!" the man on the roof became angry and said, "What, you have checked my movement?" Any gentleman, Prabhupāda said, will speak out if he sees another in danger, even though the one in danger may object.

Prabhupāda's German devotees accompanied him on speaking engagements in nearby towns, and although he was not very enthusiastically received by most people, the devotees became more dedicated than ever to give their lives in the service of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. For his public engagements he sat on a small cushion, so as not to agitate the indignation of people who could not understand the tradition of the guru.

At one engagement a wealthy businessman, two of whose sons were Prabhupāda's disciples, questioned Prabhupāda. "How can a crocodile of the Nile swim in a German river? In other words, how can you transplant a foreign culture with Indian ways and dress to Germany?"

"You can become Kṛṣṇa conscious in a tie and suit," Prabhupāda replied.

"Isn't this chanting self-hypnosis?" asked another man.

"No," Prabhupāda replied staunchly, "it is purification." And so it went—mostly challenges, with a few sincere inquiries.

While Prabhupāda was in Frankfurt, two interested, distinguished visitors came to see him: a Benedictine monk, Father Emmanuel, and Baron von Durkheim, a prominent German philosopher and spiritual writer. Both men were attracted by Prabhupāda's philosophical explanations and accompanied him on his morning walks for several days.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda's next stop was Australia. He had worked out a schedule whereby he would attend three Ratha-yātrā festivals in three cities: first in Melbourne, then a week later in Chicago, and two days later in San Francisco. He would then go to Los Angeles, Dallas, and New Vrindaban, timing everything for his return to Vṛndāvana by July 25 for the Krishna-Balaram Mandir opening two weeks later.

He was now regularly referring to the opening date of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir as a time when many devotees from around the world could gather at Vṛndāvana to be with him. On June 17 he had written from Germany to Jayahari in London.

I am presently traveling through Europe and in the past weeks have held many programs in Rome, Geneva, Paris and now Germany. I, therefore, have no time to carefully study and decide on your proposals. The best thing is if you can come and meet with me personally after I have finished this present tour. I am planning to go to Vrindaban for Janmastami, for the opening in stallation ceremonies of our Kṛṣṇa Balaram Temple. If you can come to see me in Vrindaban I would be glad to discuss and plan with you what is best for your devotional service engagement.

After a twenty-hour flight from Frankfurt to Australia, Prabhupāda was picked up at the Melbourne airport by devotees in a borrowed Rolls Royce. The newspaper reporters were quick to notice the car. "DIVINE GRACE COMES ROLLSING IN," read one headline. The story began, "Sixty young Hare Krishna devotees yesterday welcomed their earthly leader to the city with obeisances—but official Melbourne met him coolly."

Another story began, "A chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce will meet the founder of the materialistic-shunning Hare Krishna sect, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, at Tullamarine today." Another newspaper showed a large picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda smiling and bore the headline "H.D.G. IS HERE TO HOUND US." The story began,

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement, is here to save us from the dog's life. Unless we cultivate some spiritual knowledge, warns HDG, we are left with "the dog's mentality".

News coverage of Prabhupāda's visit didn't end with reports on his arrival at the airport. The next day, while the devotees were preparing the Ratha-yātrā carts, an extraordinary incident resulted in front-page headlines in The Herald.

Krishna sect uses canopy to save women from blazing office

MONKS from the Hare Krishna sect held the painted canvas canopy of their religious wagon as a safety net so five screaming women could jump to safety from a blazing three-story building in Melbourne yesterday.

The article was accompanied by two large pictures showing "Hare Krishnas" holding the large canvas canopy.

Although the news media was unable to understand the disciples' love for Śrīla Prabhupāda, the rescue was something everyone could relate to. Wrote a columnist in The Australian,

The fact that makes the rescue doubly impressive, was the use of a HOLY rug—not just an ordinary bedroom one—for the rescue mission. The rug was being sewn for use at a religious festival in Melbourne tomorrow.

The columnist coyly speculated whether the devotees' "holy rug" was still usable in the religious festival as a canopy for His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

You see, the Swami is not one of your ordinary swamis. He is the founder of the Hare Krishna, and the group describes him as the Lord Of The Universe. Devotee spokesmen had reported, however, that the "rug" would be used in the festival.

The incident proved to be good publicity for the festival the next day, when Lord Jagannātha, the Lord of the universe, and His pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda, held a Ratha-yātrā procession through the main streets of Melbourne. Regarding media coverage, Prabhupāda had said that simply the printing of the holy names Hare Kṛṣṇa greatly benefited the readers, regardless of whether the names were mentioned in reverence or disrespect.

Amogha: Prabhupāda met Lord Jagannātha at City Square by Town Hall. There was a vyāsāsana on the cart, but he chose to walk before the carts, in front of the Deity of Lord Caitanya. Prabhupāda was wearing a gold wool cap, a peach-colored turtleneck jersey, and an effulgent silk saffron dhotī and kurtā. Around his shoulders he wore a white silk cādar, and he wore a garland of orchids and many yellow flowers. It was winter in Melbourne and quite cold, but he put his hands up and chanted and danced.

We had about eleven new mṛdaṅgas. There were also three men playing big bass drums. And we all formed a circle around Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was ecstatic, all playing drums, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and Prabhupāda himself chanting in the parade, going on through the city. Prabhupāda marched with transcendental power, just taking over the city, walking right down Swanson Street.

Sabhāpati: From the point of view of weather, it wasn't a very nice day. Prabhupāda met the ratha cart at the corner of Swanson Street and Burk Street, and he led from there on. He walked about two miles. All the devotees had been having kīrtana in three different groups, but when Prabhupāda met the Ratha-yātrā procession we all gathered around him. He was leading the procession. Behind him was a fourteen-foot mūrti of Lord Caitanya, followed by three ratha carts. Every now and again in the procession Prabhupāda would stop and turn around and stare up at Lord Caitanya. He would simply stand and look up at Lord Caitanya for a minute or two, and then he would turn around again and lead the procession. It was such an ecstatic experience that one gets the feeling that Prabhupāda had conquered Melbourne, and Australia.

Gaura Gopāla: I was right next to Prabhupāda through the whole ceremony, playing the drum. He particularly liked to sing one tune through the whole time. He put his hands up in the air. He was dancing.

Vaikuṇṭhanātha: The Ratha-yātrā parade was going, and Prabhupāda was walking, and at one point he asked me, "Get me some water." I became panic-stricken because there was nowhere to get water. So I just depended on Kṛṣṇa and ran over to a house as fast as I could and asked the people for some water. They gave it, and I ran back to Śrīla Prabhupāda. When I was getting that water, though, there was this big rainbow out, and it had actually begun to rain a little bit. It was a very vivid rainbow, and the end of the rainbow came right down on top of the huge building where the Ratha-yātrā ended.

Hari-śauri: There is a huge place, the Exhibition Buildings, and we had rented one section of it where the roof was about eighty feet high. So the ratha carts were taken in with the tops lowered, and then the tops were put up again inside the hall. All three ratha carts were brought in, and the tops were pulled up. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda came in, and everyone was seated. About a thousand people were there. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat up on the vyāsāsana on the ratha cart itself and gave a lecture from there.

Sabhāpati: Although it was a cold and rather nasty day, there were a thousand people in that Exhibition Building. Prabhupāda's lecture was brief: He thanked everyone for coming along and joining in the saṅkīrtana movement of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He told everyone he was very appreciative of how they had come to see Lord Jagannātha and of how they were taking part. He said that actually all these activities of singing and dancing were due to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

The Melbourne newspapers duly reported the Ratha-yātrā: "A day for cymbals and chants," "Chariots top the Swami." One newspaper reported, "Don't let Krishna alarm you: cleric."

The sight of the Hare Krishna youths in Melbourne streets should not alarm Australians or cause them to mock, the Rev. Gordon Powell said in Scots Church yesterday.

He said the sect could be a sign of the swing of the pendulum back to spiritual values and traditional virtues on the part of modern youth.

The article praised the devotees' "reaction against extreme materialism" and reported the events of the Ratha-yātrā parade. Reverend Powell, head bishop of the Anglican Church in Melbourne, had paid Śrīla Prabhupāda a visit, and this had resulted in the bishop's Sunday sermon comment that "Hare Krishnas" were not alarming. Śrīla Prabhupāda took the bishop's comments as very significant.

During his week's stay in Melbourne, Prabhupāda attended a large program at the Town Hall, where he inspired a long and ecstatic kīrtana, with one thousand people dancing in a circle before the Deity of Lord Caitanya. He also visited St. Pascal's Teaching College, a Franciscan seminary, and was very well received by the monks there. The seminarians asked intelligent philosophical questions, one of them inquiring about what Prabhupāda thought of their founder, Saint Francis of Assisi. The seminarian described briefly how Saint Francis saw everything in the universe in relation to God and addressed nature's creations as Brother tree, Brother bird, and so on. Saint Francis's attitude, Prabhupāda replied, was first-class God consciousness.

That same evening in his room Prabhupāda met with the vicar-general of the Roman Catholic Church in Australia, Reverend J. A. Kelly. Prabhupāda played a recording of his morning's lecture at St. Pascal's, and afterward the Reverend asked if Prabhupāda would pose with him for a picture to be printed in their religious periodical. Again, the newspapers picked it up: "Swami spreads unity message."

The normally serene cloisters of the Roman Catholic Yarra Theological Union echoed to the chants of Hare Krishna yesterday...

"It does not matter what religion you belong to as long as you love and serve God," said His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

"We must be delivered from the disease of materialism, or else there will always be want."

After the discussion, the president of the institute's Student Representative Council, Franciscan seminarian Patrick McClure, 25, said that there seemed to be a consensus in many areas.

"In particular we agree with the need to reject materialism," he said.

Mr. McClure said the informal meeting reflected an openness and tolerance in the church.

"Maybe they have something to tell us," he said.

July 1

In Melbourne Prabhupāda dictated a letter to Guru dāsa in Vṛṇ dāvana. It was less than six weeks before the scheduled opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir, and Śrīla Prabhupāda had not received regular reports from Vṛndāvana. He was concerned that everything be ready on time for a gorgeous ceremony.

My dear Gurudas,

Please accept my blessings. I am spending my last two days in Australia and after this I shall go to the U.S.A. In the meantime, I wish to give you some instructions regarding our Janmastami installation in Vrindaban.

The main thing is the ceremony shall be conducted by our own men. We do not have to be dependent on taking help from persons who will not even eat with us, thinking us inferior. All over the world, in Paris, New York, Australia, etc., our men and women are worshiping the deity very nicely and I am very proud of their worship. There is no reason why we have to think we are dependent on any Indian goswami in order to conduct our ceremony in Vrindaban. So you understand this and be convinced of it, and let them come as invited but we shall conduct the affair ourselves.

You can also arrange to have the Her Govinda dramatical players and our own players as well. There should be abundant prasadam for whoever comes all day long. The kitchen should go on. So see there is sufficient stock of rice, attar [flour], ghee. The life members should be especially cared for and invited. We shall manage our own affairs. If they come that is good but if not we shall manage. From our side everything should be done nicely.

All big officers in Mathura and Vrindaban should be invited. Goswamis and godbrothers also. Also invite local Marawadis and invite Parthak also. Practically by distributing a general invitation card we shall invite everyone. All the inhabitants of Vrindaban will be invited to come and see the deity and take prasadam. There should be special arrangement for life members, Mr. Birla and many

other respectable visitors. There is no question of money. Let it be a firstclass, 1-A arrangement. Kṛṣṇa will provide all expenditures so try to make it gorgeous. Gorgeous means sufficient stock of prasadam and temple decorations as gorgeous as possible. The internal management of dressing can be done by Yamuna, Madira and Jayatirtha they are all expert. The shastric direction can be from Pradyumna...

Also Mr. Jai Purna of Karnapur came to see me, so invitation should be extended to him. Invite all local asramas and sannyasis as well. I do not hear of Pranava; I sent him a telegram but there is no reply.

The whole management should be done combinedly. Do not fight amongst yourselves, that is my only anxiety. I shall leave for Vrindaban by 25th July. In the meantime, reply to me at L.A.

Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

While Guru dāsa got direct instruction on the ceremony, almost every other devotee Prabhupāda wrote received his personal invitation to the Krishna-Balaram Mandir opening. In a letter to Cyavana Mahārāja in West Africa, Prabhupāda wrote,

You want to see me and I also have some important things to discuss with you, so the best thing is if we meet at the end of July in Vrindaban, India. Today I am leaving for the United States to attend Rathayatra in Chicago and San Francisco but at the end of July I will reach Vrindaban. We are having a very big festival there on Janmastami when we will open our Kṛṣṇa Balaram temple by installing the deities. So you must also attend to help in conducting the ceremonies. I will therefore see you in Vrindaban by the end of July.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's engagement at La Trobe University in Melbourne was like a repeat of the unpleasant incident with the radicals at La Salle Pleyel in Paris. It was, again, a large, free-admission audience of students, and again the disciples had prepared Prabhupāda a standard vyāsāsana. Devotees held a kīrtana onstage and introduced Śrīla Prabhupāda, who began speaking very basically about the distinction between the soul and the body and about how this education is required for all people. But after no more than ten minutes, a young man in the audience stood up and began to shout profanities at Śrīla Prabhupāda. "And how do you explain your Rolls Royce?" he added.

The audience, which had been quiet until the interruption, now became noisy and restless. Three of Śrīla Prabhupāda's more aggressive disciples left the front row and went to the back, where the man was shouting. Meanwhile Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped speaking and sat tolerantly, waiting. The shouting stopped, and he began again. "As I was explaining, in material life we have been changing from one body to another. This is not a very good condition of life. Nobody wants to die, but he is forced to die."

After five minutes, the abusive language again broke out. This time Śrīla Prabhupāda's three disciples pushed the shouters out the back door. In the fight, one of the students pulled a knife from his boot, but a devotee disarmed him.

The atmosphere inside the auditorium was tense, and many people were talking loudly. Some got up to leave. Madhudviṣa Swami, taking the microphone, pleaded with the students to remain calm and continue hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Some students in the audience seemed on the verge of violence, and the devotees feared for Prabhupāda's safety. But Prabhupāda was willing to continue. He called for questions.

Student: "I am a Christian, and I would like to know what is your opinion of Jesus Christ."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "We respect Jesus Christ as you do, because he is representative of God, son of God. We are also speaking of God, so we respect him with our greatest veneration."

Question: "You are a son of Jesus too?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Yes, I am a servant of Jesus. I don't say I am Jesus."

Question: "I want to know if you have the power of Jesus?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "No, I have no power of Jesus."

Question: "Well, I've got the power of Jesus! [Laughter.] Because I'm a Christian."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "That's all right. You are Christian. We are Kṛṣṇian. It is practically the same thing." (Laughter and applause.)

Student: "I have one other question. I believe Jesus is coming back, and not Kṛṣṇa. What are you guys going to do when you see Jesus?" (Laughter)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "When he is coming, welcome. We shall welcome. It is very good news that Jesus is coming."

Student: "Jesus had no reputation. He wore sandals and was crucified between two thieves. And your spirituality is on a Rolls Royce and a padded seat, and you're all into money—you Kṛṣṇas, you want money."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "I don't want money."

Student: "And you say violence is violence, that's what you believe. Jesus turned the other cheek, and he expected his followers to." (Applause.)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is not a sentimental religious system. It is science and philosophy." Prabhupāda explained that understanding the science of God was transcendental to Christianity or Hinduism. The real goal was to learn to love God.

Second student: "I have a question about Krishnamurti. Krishnamurti stresses that when you are speaking in the Western world, you should speak and present yourself as a Westerner, not as an Indian or as you would speak in India. Instead of sitting on a raised dais and dressing in the robes of a monk, Krishnamurti would say dress in Western clothes and sit on a chair. What is your opinion of this?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Actually a God conscious person is neither a Westerner nor Easterner. So anywhere the devotee goes, as they receive him, he accepts. These devotees have arranged a raised seat, so I have accepted the raised seat. If they wanted me to sit down on the floor, I would have gladly accepted. I have no objection to this or that. But as devotees receive and give honor, that is good for them, because actually we should honor the Supreme Lord God and His representative. Nowadays it is different. Students are not learning to honor. But that is not actually the system. According to the Vedic system, the representative of God must be honored as God."

Another student (loudly): "Do you consider your movement the major form of enlightenment emanating from the United States today? What particular role does your movement play in the White House psychological warfare department? Will you be coming to our Fourth of July demonstration against the United States this year and take up the real political issues?"

Again many students began shouting. Madhudviṣa Swami took the microphone. "I can answer if you like. Our movement is not from the United States. If you have some paranoia that everything is coming from the United States, well, that is your hang-up, not mine. [Applause.] And second of all, our spiritual master came to the United States to start this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because he got a free ticket on the boat to go there. If you would have sent him a free ticket, he probably would have come to Australia first. So he is trying to spread love of God. He is not trying to start any kind of political movement. He is trying to spark a revolutionary consciousness. I think you are also interested in revolution. We are interested in revolution also. But we are interested in revolution which will help people to feel peace themselves, whether they are Communists or Marxists or whatever it is you like. We are trying to help people attain happiness whether they are—"

Madhudviṣa Swami's remarks triggered the largest vocal protest yet. The commotion rose as students all over the hall began to shout. There was no possibility of a peaceful philosophical discussion.

The devotees' greatest concern became getting Prabhupāda out of the hall unharmed. Prabhupāda rose from his vyāsāsana and, escorted by his disciples, left by a side exit. A large crowd of students had gathered outside the door as Prabhupāda emerged, but he entered his waiting car without incident. As he rode slowly through a cluster of students a girl kicked at the car with her booted foot. And as the devotees were getting into their vans students threw stones. Finally, as the devotees drove off the campus, they had to pass under an elevated walkway where some waiting students threw black paint down onto the vans.

Riding in his car, Prabhupāda was mostly silent, but he seemed disgusted. He said that in the future, he would only give lectures in classes where he was invited; no more wide-open lectures.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda flew from Melbourne to Chicago, stopping overnight in Hawaii. His schedule allowed him only a couple of days in Chicago, where he would attend that city's first Ratha-yātrā festival.

He was very keen on holding Ratha-yātrās in big cities around the world. And although large crowds often could not hear Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy without becoming restless, angered, or even violent, everyone could enjoy and benefit from a Ratha-yātrā festival. Śrīla Prabhupāda had written in *The Nectar of Devotion*, quoting from the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, "A person who follows the Ratha-yātrā car when the rathas pass in front or from behind, even if born of a lowly family, will surely be elevated to the position of achieving equal opulence with Viṣṇu."

In Jagannātha Purī, India, the original home of Jagannātha worship, a Westerner could see Lord Jagannātha only during the yearly Ratha-yātrā festival, when the Deity would come out of the temple and ride on His cart. And besides, very few Westerners would actually go to Jagannātha Purī. But Śrīla Prabhupāda and his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement were making Lord Jagannātha available to everyone by bringing the Ratha-yātrā right down the main street of their city. It may seem odd to the average American or Australian, but from the viewpoint of Lord Jagannātha and His followers, it was perfectly proper. Lord Jagannātha, "the Lord of the universe," was for everyone, everywhere, regardless of nationality or religion.

This year's festival, 1974, would mark the eighth annual San Francisco Ratha-yātrā. And now, at Prabhupāda's urging, devotees in more and more cities were beginning to hold the festival. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to give utmost prestige to this kind of preaching, and so he had gone out of his way to come to Chicago, where he had never been before, just to ride an hour down State Street on Lord Jagannātha's cart. Prabhupāda felt that his disciples, by holding Ratha-yātrās in cities on every continent, would defeat false religion. And spontaneously people would be attracted to Kṛṣṇa, simply by enjoying a festival of singing, dancing, feasting, and seeing the Lord.

Prabhupāda stood in downtown Chicago before the large, elaborately decorated car, eager to ascend to the seat where he would ride during the procession. But there was no ladder, so he waited while devotees ran to a hardware store and got one. Then he mounted the cart and sat on his vyāsāsana.

The city was busy with thousands of shoppers and workers. Many members of Chicago's large Indian community had turned out to receive the Lord's blessings and to observe this tradition so well known to them. And hundreds of Prabhupāda's disciples from throughout the Midwest had gathered to pull on the ropes of the cart, lead kīrtanas, and distribute prasādam and *Back to Godhead* magazines, as the big cart plied down one of the busiest streets in America.

Although several policemen on motorcycles led the procession, their mood was hardly that of the King of Orissa, who had traditionally led the Ratha-yātrā procession in India. Each year the king would present himself as a menial servant, leading the parade by sweeping the road before Lord Jagannātha with a gold-handled broom. The Chicago police, however, seemed intent only in getting the parade over with as soon as possible. With stern anxiety they dedicated themselves to keeping

open the flow of ordinary automobile traffic. They acknowledged that the devotees had an official permit for the parade, but they continually prodded them to pull the cart faster, threatening to terminate the parade entirely.

By Kṛṣṇa's grace, however, everyone, including the Chicago police, became satisfied as the procession moved along peacefully for several miles, finally arriving at the Civic Center Plaza. Amid skyscrapers and city noise, Śrīla Prabhupāda addressed the outdoor audience. Immediately following the lecture, the devotees began prasādam distribution and kīrtana. Prabhupāda was pleased by the festival.

* * *

San Francisco

July 7

Thousands followed the three carts for several miles through Golden Gate Park. Śrīla Prabhupāda, riding on the second cart, beneath the deity of Subhadrā, wore the same golden wool cap he had worn in Australia, a white bulky knit sweater, and a garland of red roses. Despite his recent extensive traveling, he was alert and well. He looked out at the sea of devotees and parade-followers and took great satisfaction in the transcendental scene.

In his speech before a crowd of ten thousand, Prabhupāda said that the Americans should lead the world in propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "I know that all American ladies and gentlemen here are educated and intelligent," he said, "and I am very much obliged to the Americans who have helped me make this movement popular all over the world. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu first introduced the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, He said, *bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma/ yāra janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra*. He thus expressed His desire by saying that anyone who has taken birth as a human being in Bhārata-varṣa, or India, should understand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and spread it all over the world for the benefit of all humanity. He also predicted that in all the villages and towns of the entire world the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will be known.

"So with the cooperation of you young Americans who are kindly helping to spread this movement, it is now factually becoming well known all over the world. I recently went to Melbourne, Australia, where we held a similar festival in which many thousands of people joined and chanted and danced with us. Then I went to Chicago, where we held the same ceremony. Now this morning I have come here, and I am so glad to see that you are also joining this movement."

Prabhupāda's fingers tapped lightly against his karatālas as he spoke, his eyes half closed. He chose his words with confidence, and those words echoed across the meadow. Prabhupāda requested his audience not to think that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was sectarian; it was meant for everyone, because the real nature of the self was spiritual. Chanting the holy name and dancing, he said, were not ordinary.

"It is open to everyone who will simply chant the mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. You are generally young,

whereas I am an old man who may die at any moment. Therefore I request you to take this movement seriously. Understand it yourselves, and then preach it throughout your country. People outside America generally follow and imitate what America does. I am traveling all over the world, and everywhere I see other countries building skyscrapers and in other ways imitating your country. Therefore if you kindly become Kṛṣṇa conscious and chant and dance in ecstasy, in emotional love of God, the entire world will follow you. Thus the entire world can become Vaikuṇṭha, a spiritual world in which there will be no more trouble. Thank you very much."

* * *

Guru dāsa had sent a letter to all ISKCON centers inviting devotees to attend the opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir in Vṛndāvana. He had invited life members from Bombay and Calcutta and had reserved cars for them on the trains. Prabhupāda also was inviting his disciples to come to Vṛndāvana for Janmāṣṭamī. Lecturing before hundreds of devotees in Los Angeles, he said, "I invite all of you to come to Vṛndāvana to the opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir."

Prabhupāda had also mailed invitations to his Godbrothers, and when one of them, Śrīdhara Mahārāja of Navadvīpa, accepted the invitation, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, assuring him of comfortable accommodations and suggesting the easiest way to travel from Calcutta to Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda also told Śrīdhara Mahārāja of his preaching.

You will be glad to know that our books are selling very nicely. Last year we sold about four million books, and this year within six months we have completed last year's quota, and therefore we can reasonably expect to double the sale of last year. The only difficulty is that we are expanded worldwide organization, and it requires very acute management to keep up the status quo. So by Krishna's grace everything is going on nicely.

Regarding preaching tour, it has become a little difficult for me because I have got the same heart trouble as you have, and still I am moving just to encourage these young boys and girls who are working on my behalf.

On July 15, only ten days before Prabhupāda's proposed arrival in Vṛndāvana, he wrote almost identical letters to his sannyāsī disciples, inviting them to come and resolve the many personal matters and items of business that had been pending during his busy tour.

I cordially invite you to attend our opening ceremony in Vrindaban because all of our sannyasis will be present there. You also come there as a regular sannyasi and take part. That is my desire.

When Karandhara, the newly-appointed G.B.C. for India, began to express doubts that everything would be ready on time, Prabhupāda replied from Los Angeles,

The festival must be gorgeously done. It should not be poor. If there is a scarcity of money, it will be supplied. There must be full prasādam for all the guests. You plan for that, and I will supply the funds. Complete prasad distribution must go on.

Regarding the temple not being finished on time, that is your responsibility. What can I do?

Although Prabhupāda had responded to Karandhara forcefully, the note of uncertainty from his head manager in India disturbed him. He wrote to Surabhi, who was in charge of the Vṛndāvana construction, "I am a little agitated in mind because Karandhara's letter says that there may be some work to be done even during the time of our festival."

While in Los Angeles, Prabhupāda also received word that the London Ratha-yātrā, scheduled for later that month, had been canceled by the local authorities; the previous year's parade, officials said, had seriously interfered with traffic. Prabhupāda insisted that the devotees protest this unreasonable ruling. "It is religious discrimination," he said. And he advised that sympathetic Indians in London approach the ambassador and request him to present the matter before the queen. The recent statements of the Reverend Powell of Melbourne could be used to demonstrate that Christians should not be alarmed by the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. "The police objection means that the whole religious ceremony should be stopped?" Prabhupāda challenged. "What is this? Simply for some technical mistake, now they will stop our whole religious ceremony?"

Prabhupāda said that if the City continued to prohibit the parade, the devotees should erect a stationary cart in Hyde Park and hold a festival there, without a procession. "After holding our ceremony," said Prabhupāda, "we shall take the deity in a palanquin and go to Trafalgar Square. The ratha will stay. It will not move. But we shall take the deities on palanquin and go to Trafalgar Square. In this way, take police permission and, after going there along with the ceremony, protest. They cannot object. But the ratha must be seen. And the people must know that the rascal police government has stopped it."

Prabhupāda repeated his instructions several times. He was in a grave mood as he instructed his followers. "My Guru Mahārāja used to say, *prāṇa āche yāñra sei hetu pracāra*: one who has got life, he can preach. The dead man cannot preach. So you become with life, not like dead man. Just like all my Godbrothers, they are dead men. And therefore they are envious of my activities. They have no life. If you want to make an easygoing life, showing the Deity and then sleep, then it is a failure movement."

Prabhupāda could not bear to hear that such an important festival as Ratha-yātrā was being stopped. "We shall abide by all the rules," he said, "but we must have this festival. They saw last year that in the open sunshine thousands of people, tens of thousands of people, stood in Trafalgar Square for three hours. And they do not go to the church. So they have seen there is something. Otherwise, how people have taken so much interest?"

Brahmānanda Swami: "Yes, just like in the San Francisco paper, they admitted, 'This is the most popular festival.'"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, fifteen thousand people attended my lecture silently in San Francisco. So they are seeing there is something in the movement. But sometimes some parties do not want us to go on without objection, or else they will be finished."

On the day of Prabhupāda's departure from Los Angeles, he addressed the assembled devotees in the temple, encouraging them to remain faithful in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And he revealed his own

feelings of urgency. His constant traveling was for his disciples—so they would remain strong. And if they remained strong, following the simple programs he had given them, then their success was guaranteed. “Some way or other,” he said, “we have introduced this program in the Western countries. And you are so intelligent, you have very soon captured it. So stick to the standard. Then your life is successful. It is not at all difficult. But don't deviate. Then you are pakkā. Pakkā means ‘solid’: mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te. If you remain solid in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then māyā cannot touch you.

“So that is my request. I am traveling all over the world. I am going to see how things are going in Dallas and New Vrindaban. So my touring is natural. I have started this movement. I want to see that it is going nicely. Don't deviate. That is my only request.” Prabhupāda began to cry and simply concluded, “Then you will remain solid. Thank you very much.”

New Vrindaban

July 18, 1974

A letter from Karandhara reached Śrīla Prabhupāda, informing him of his resignation as G.B.C. for India. The responsibilities were too great for him, for he had only recently come back to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He would continue to follow the spiritual program, but he could not be the G.B.C. Again Śrīla Prabhupāda was set back, and before several G.B.C. men in his room at New Vrindaban he asked, “What to do? What shall we do? So maybe I should just give up these projects in India.”

“But Śrīla Prabhupāda,” the devotees replied, “those India projects are very dear to you.”

“But what can be done?” Prabhupāda asked.

Except for Guru dāsa, none of the devotees in Vṛndāvana thought that the building would be ready by the scheduled grand opening. Work was going along slowly, as usual, and except for the Deity hall area, the land was still a construction site. There were no altars, no Deities. Tejās thought Guru dāsa so feared displeasing Prabhupāda that he could not bear to admit that the building would not be ready. The date had been set, and Prabhupāda did not want excuses. “It has to be done by Janmāṣṭamī,” he wrote. “There is no question of delay.” Guru dāsa admitted that the temple construction wouldn't be completely finished by Janmāṣṭamī, but he reasoned that the opening ceremony could still take place, even if the final touches on the temple weren't done.

Because there was no regular G.B.C. secretary for India, Prabhupāda did not receive accurate reports on the Vṛndāvana temple construction. When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami had left in April to preach in the West, several months had passed before Prabhupāda had appointed a replacement, Karandhara. Now, after only a few weeks, Karandhara had resigned. Guru dāsa's version, therefore, was the only one Prabhupāda had received. The end of July grew near, and devotees prepared to travel to Vṛndāvana—for a fiasco.

* * *

Vṛndāvana

August 4, 1974

When Prabhupāda's car pulled up at the ISKCON property in Ramanā-reti, a group of devotees greeted him with kīrtana and flowers. Some twenty-five devotees from temples around the world had already gathered for the grand opening celebration, and along with the Vṛndāvana devotees they crowded happily around Śrīla Prabhupāda. No formal walkways had been constructed, and Prabhupāda walked through the half-constructed walls, past piles of sand and bricks, making his way toward the Deity house. Even here the lack of ornamentation and finishing was apparent, and rubble lay all around.

"What is this?" Prabhupāda demanded as he toured the construction site. "There is nothing here. Where is the temple? You told me the temple was finished." Guru dāsa, Surabhi, Guṇārṇava, and others directly responsible were unable to answer. Their faces went white.

Prabhupāda was furious. "How can you open this?"

The visiting devotees also began speaking among themselves: "It's not ready. How can we open?"

"But Prabhupāda," said one devotee, "devotees from all over the world are coming."

"Stop them immediately!" Prabhupāda said. "There will be no opening!"

Prabhupāda had burst the bubble, the illusion that they would be ready for the grand opening. Prabhupāda's anger was frightening, and the devotees who surrounded him were no longer carefree and joyful. "You were going to open this temple?" Prabhupāda scoffed.

"The altar is ready," said Harikeśa, who had come from Japan to attend the opening. "We can install the Deity and—"

"You cannot open this temple!" Prabhupāda shouted. "This temple is not completed!"

Prabhupāda then walked into his house, followed by the Vṛndāvana managers and a few other leaders. Whoever could keep his distance from Prabhupāda in this mood considered himself spared. Surabhi's wife ran off to pray to Kṛṣṇa, afraid of Prabhupāda's ferocity.

In his room Prabhupāda's anger only increased. He yelled at Guru dāsa for mismanagement. He yelled at Surabhi. He yelled at all of them. No one dared to offer suggestions or excuses. There was nothing to do but turn white and become depressed. Prabhupāda suddenly inquired whether the temple could be opened, despite the mess. "Can you have the Deity rooms ready at least?" He turned to Surabhi. "This is an insult to our Society. What will people think? We have announced it everywhere!"

"Nobody actually knows about it, Śrīla Prabhupāda," Surabhi replied fearfully, exposing himself for another blast.

"Oh?" Prabhupāda somewhat changed his tone. "You have not made any propaganda about it? No invitations?"

"Not yet, Prabhupāda. Not to the people in Vṛndāvana. They do not expect it to open, because everyone who has been here can see that it is not possible to open. They know it's not ready."

"This is a farce," Prabhupāda scowled. "It is a fiasco." Disgusted, he looked at his Vṛndāvana managers. "We have to open. How can we open on Janmāṣṭamī?"

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," Surabhi said, "the doors are not ready. They are still cutting the wood." Prabhupāda inquired about the Deities from Yamunā, who explained that Their paraphernalia had been purchased but that the thrones were not ready.

"What is your opinion?" he asked her.

"I am totally unqualified to speak," Yamunā said, "and although I have no right to speak, I see it as almost impossible to actually open the temple. There is no pūjārī."

With a sense of finality and failure, Prabhupāda said, "Then we won't do it. But we have invited so many people from all around the world to come, and I was not informed of this. Now you all decide."

"When can we open?" Prabhupāda asked. "Can we open on Diwali? When is Diwali?"

"October, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"How about Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's appearance day?" a devotee suggested. "That's at the end of December."

Prabhupāda was silent, looking displeased. Surabhi spoke up. "It will take six months, actually seven months." Then Prabhupāda chose the day of Rāma-navamī, in April; the opening could coincide with the annual gathering of devotees in Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana.

Surabhi spoke again. He had grown pessimistic from his experiences with construction in India. "It depends on whether we can get the cement, Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said. "We have to get it from the government. That was the main obstacle preventing us from opening now. We could possibly have the opening in three months, if we could get cement."

"All right," Prabhupāda said, resigned—there was no use trying to set a date. "It will be done before next Janmāṣṭamī." His tone was sarcastic. "And if the cement can be obtained, it can be done after three months."

Later, while meeting with various individuals, Prabhupāda continued to express his displeasure, especially to Guru dāsa. He asked questions but was dissatisfied with the answers. He asked Guru dāsa to bring the financial records, and then he reprimanded him more. Finding a receipt for Guru dāsa's stay in an expensive hotel in Jaipur, Prabhupāda made an issue of it. Guru dāsa became aloof.

When Prabhupāda finished talking with him, Guru dāsa returned to his room, staying there unless Śrīla Prabhupāda called for him.

Prabhupāda began talking about changing the temple presidents in Vṛndāvana; he suggested Harikeśa. Guru dāsa and his wife, he said, could be in charge of the guesthouse, which was as yet only a hole in the ground. He called Guru dāsa again and asked what he thought of his managing the Vṛndāvana guesthouse, suggesting he go to the Jaipuria Guesthouse in Vṛndāvana for ideas about management.

"But Prabhupāda," Guru dāsa said, "they charge such low rates at the Jaipuria Guesthouse. I'm sure those rates must be subsidized."

"This Mr. Jaipuria is a Marwari businessman," Prabhupāda replied. "He's not losing money on the guesthouse. He's making money. That is the art of management. That you have to learn by going there and seeing." But Guru dāsa felt too exhausted by the austerities of living and managing in India, where Prabhupāda's attention and criticism were so demanding and intense and where everything was so difficult. He and his wife began to think of leaving Vṛndāvana.

Prabhupāda continued to pressure Surabhi, calling him in at different times of the day. "Why aren't these Deity doors up?" Prabhupāda demanded.

"I am trying, Śrīla Prabhupāda," Surabhi replied. "There are so many things to do."

"Never mind," Prabhupāda said, "you have to get it done. These hired men are all cheating you. Don't let them cheat you. It is not easy for all these devotees to collect money. It is all Kṛṣṇa's money and can only be used for Kṛṣṇa's projects. Protect that money and see it doesn't go in the hands of the wrong people. I don't want the contractors to become rich men because of our projects. And I want marble on that building. Where is the marble?"

"Where can I get marble?" Surabhi asked.

"Why are you asking me these questions?" Prabhupāda shouted. "You are the expert. I don't know. Use your intelligence."

Ultimately, Prabhupāda's anger with his disciples was incidental, the reaction due them for their foolishness. It was also a way of instructing them and testing them. But deeper was Prabhupāda's transcendental impatience and frustration that his devotional service in Vṛndāvana was still not manifested. He wanted a wonderful temple for the glory of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, a temple that would establish Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. It was an offering to his spiritual master, and he had promised it to Kṛṣṇa. But still it was not completed.

As for Prabhupāda's disciples' failure to do the job, Prabhupāda had to take the burden and the agony of that failure. His disciples were his instruments in his service to Kṛṣṇa. If the instruments didn't work properly, then he suffered, just as when one's arms and legs fail to function, the whole body suffers. His disciples' failure to carry out his desires was his loss. In this way, he felt

transcendental lamentation over their failure to open the Krishna-Balaram Mandir on Janmāṣṭamī day.

Prabhupāda's disturbance, though transcendental, was nonetheless real; it was not feigned merely for instructing. Nor could the devotees cheaply "cheer up" their spiritual master. For Prabhupāda's disciples to properly assist him, they would have to understand his transcendental mood and serve him accordingly. Prabhupāda wanted practical, down-to-earth service from his disciples. They should not expect to serve him sentimentally but should work hard. Devotional service was dynamic. Prabhupāda wanted his disciples to help him with his projects to serve his Guru Mahārāja—projects which, if successful, could save the world from misery.

Getting concrete was a big problem. Surabhi, Guṇārṇava, Tejās, and others were always meditating and striving, "How to get cement?" Yet it seemed no cement was available in the whole of India, as month after month they waited for government permission. Daily, since Prabhupāda's arrival for the so-called temple opening, the devotees had been traveling by bus and ricksha to Mathurā to see if cement—even a few bags—was available.

Sometimes they were cheated. One shipment of twenty bags had been cut with other materials, and when they used it in casting a column, it remained soft for four days and finally crumbled. When at last enough cement arrived to complete the work, the devotees felt sure it had happened only because of Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence.

Prabhupāda had Guṇārṇava count every bag of cement as it arrived. From eight in the morning until nine-thirty at night the shipment kept coming on trucks, each truck with four coolies to carry the heavy bags on their backs into the storage shed. Guṇārṇava stood outside all day with pad and pen, marking the receipt of each bag. Śrīla Prabhupāda came out of the house several times and watched gravely. In the evening, when they were finished, he called Guṇārṇava in. "So how many bags?" Prabhupāda asked, and Guṇārṇava gave the exact figure.

"Everything is locked away now?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Prabhupāda talked about the cement as if talking about a shipment of gold.

August 12

Prabhupāda felt very weak. It was on the afternoon of his appearance day, and he was sitting at his desk in the main room of his house. He lay down on his seat and put his head against one of the arm pillows. The following day he felt so weak he could not walk or stand. He had no appetite and ran a fever of 104 degrees. A local doctor arrived and examined Prabhupāda—malaria. He prescribed some medication, which Prabhupāda took once or twice and then refused. A second doctor came and prescribed different medicines. "Stop bringing these doctors," Prabhupāda said. "No doctor can cure me."

It was August, the monsoon season, and many devotees fell sick. When Śrutakīrti, who had recently returned to his post as Prabhupāda's personal servant, contracted malaria, Kulādri, who had come to Vṛndāvana to attend the temple opening, volunteered to assist. Then Kulādri got malaria. Other devotees became ill with malaria, jaundice, dysentery, and various digestive problems.

The weather was overcast, hot and humid, and thousands of varieties of insects began appearing. For several days at a time the sky would be cloudy, the temperature in the nineties. Then the sun would come out and steam everything up with almost intolerable heat. It was Vṛndāvana's most unhealthy season.

As Prabhupāda's condition worsened, the devotees became morose and even fearful for their spiritual master's life. They brought Prabhupāda's bed out where it was cooler, on the small patio outside his house. His servants would massage or fan him. Days passed and Prabhupāda didn't eat, except for a few grapes and some slices of orange. This was the way his father had died, he said—by not eating. Such remarks frightened Prabhupāda's disciples all the more, and they began visiting the samādhis of the Gosvāmīs to pray that Prabhupāda would be cured.

One evening Harikeśa stayed up all night near Prabhupāda's room, chanting softly a continuous kīrtana of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda liked it. "This kīrtana," he said, "is what actually gives us life." After that devotees took turns, so that there was always kīrtana.

Prabhupāda explained that his illness was due to the sins of the ISKCON leaders, eighty percent of whom were not strictly following the rules and regulations, he said. Even in Vṛndāvana some of the devotees weren't regularly rising at four A.M. Since Prabhupāda was speaking little, he had only briefly mentioned this cause of his illness. But brief as it was, it crushed his disciples. As for who was guilty, each disciple would have to say for himself. But in a mood of "Oh, God, what have we done?" all the disciples in Vṛndāvana immediately became very attentive to the rules and regulations.

In the morning Bhāgavatam class the devotees who lectured regularly discussed the subject as explained in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books: At the time of initiation Kṛṣṇa absolves the initiate of all karmic reactions due for past sinful acts. The spiritual master, however, as the representative of Kṛṣṇa, also shares in removing the disciple's karma. Kṛṣṇa, being infinite, can never be affected by such karma, whereas the spiritual master, although completely pure, is finite. The spiritual master, therefore, partially suffers the reactions for a disciple's sins, sometimes becoming ill. Jīva Gosvāmī warns that a spiritual master should not take too many disciples, because of the danger of accepting an overload of karma. Not only does the spiritual master accept the previous karma of the disciples, but if the disciples commit sins after initiation, then for those also the spiritual master may sometimes become ill.

Prabhupāda said that his "misdeed" was accepting so many disciples, but he had no choice for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The spiritual master sometimes suffers, he said, so that the disciples may know, "Due to our sinful activities, our spiritual master is suffering," and this always had a sobering effect on any would-be offender. But now, for the first time, Prabhupāda was specifically blaming his disciples for a serious illness. By neglecting their spiritual master's most basic instructions, they were causing him great distress. They understood that their spiritual master

was no ordinary malaria victim, and they knew they had to correct their mistakes and pray to Kṛṣṇa that Prabhupāda would get better.

Prabhupāda's condition was so critical and the implications of his statements so broad that his secretary, Brahmānanda Swami, thought it best to notify the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Because Prabhupāda was pleased by the twenty-four-hour kīrtana, Brahmānanda Swami thought that this program might be introduced in every ISKCON temple in the world. A few telegrams were sent, and word quickly spread that every temple should hold continuous kīrtana, petitioning Kṛṣṇa for Prabhupāda's recovery.

It reminded some of the senior disciples of 1967, when they had stayed up all night chanting and praying for Prabhupāda's recovery from an apparent heart attack. At that time Prabhupāda had encouraged them to chant a hymn to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva and to pray, "Our master has not finished his work. Please protect him." Due to the sincere prayers of the devotees, Prabhupāda had said, Kṛṣṇa had saved his life. Now, in 1974, there were many more devotees than in 1967, and all of them were praying for Prabhupāda's recovery; but now also, from what Prabhupāda had said, there were also more devotees to misbehave and cause him pain. That message—"Eighty percent of the leaders of my disciples are not following the rules and regulations; this is why I am suffering"—was not telegraphed. It was too heavy.

Prabhupāda had come to Vṛndāvana for a celebration, but there had been none. Now he was very sick, and his servant was carrying him in his arms to and from the bathroom. Other devotees were also massaging and serving him very sincerely. And there was always kīrtana for him. Meanwhile he simply depended on Kṛṣṇa and waited to get better so that he could go on with his work.

While he tolerated his condition as the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, he suddenly received word that the governor of Uttar Pradesh was coming to visit him. The governor, a Muslim named Akbar Ali Khan, was traveling in the area, and Seth Bisenchand, a friend of Prabhupāda's and the governor's, had recommended that the governor visit the temple.

Prabhupāda thought that perhaps the governor would agree to help the devotees, at least in such matters as getting government permission for steel and cement. Therefore, despite his failing health, he insisted that the devotees hold a reception in the courtyard; and he would personally go out and greet the governor. Lying on his back and speaking in a faint voice, he ordered a feast to be cooked and tables and chairs to be arranged in the courtyard.

The devotees pleaded with Prabhupāda to allow them to do everything themselves and tell the governor that Prabhupāda was very ill. "He has come," Prabhupāda said. "I have to go out and meet him."

Śrutakīrti dressed Prabhupāda in a fresh silk dhotī. Prabhupāda tried to apply the Vaiṣṇava tilaka to his forehead, but even that was a struggle and took more than five minutes. When they were ready to go, Prabhupāda asked his servant, "Have I put on my tilaka?" He seemed almost delirious from the fever and was unable to stand. Śrutakīrti and others carried him in a chair and placed him in the middle of the courtyard, where they had arranged several tables with prasādam and Prabhupāda's books.

Just before the governor's arrival, many policemen and soldiers arrived, roping off the area, directing traffic in front of the temple, and holding people outside until the governor arrived. Guṇārṇava had rolled a long red carpet from the edge of the property into the temple courtyard, and devotees lined both sides of the carpet, chanting with karatālas and mṛdaṅgas. When the governor arrived, Surabhi presented him with a garland. Immediately removing the garland, the governor walked down the red carpet and into the courtyard. Prabhupāda stood.

The devotees were amazed to see Prabhupāda standing straight and shaking the governor's hand. Prabhupāda and the governor stood together for a while and then sat down. Except for the guests, everyone present knew that Prabhupāda was not capable of much exertion. They saw him shivering and trembling, yet trying to smile and be gracious with his guest. The devotees were in great anxiety, thinking that Prabhupāda's life might end at any moment, and yet they took part in the sociable pretense along with their spiritual master. The governor, on invitation, gave a speech, talking about how India's future lay in industry.

Then Prabhupāda stood to speak, leaning against his chair. His eyes were very dark, and he was barely able to focus his vision. Although he had spoken very little for almost two weeks, he now spoke for twenty minutes, while the governor listened politely. Afterward Prabhupāda sat and honored prasādam with the governor and his entourage of fifteen ministers. After the governor left, the devotees carried Prabhupāda back to his room, where he collapsed with a 105-degree temperature.

The political guests and military escort gone, the temple site returned to its usual quiet, and the devotees resumed their soft kīrtana, chanting by Prabhupāda's bedside. Amazed at Prabhupāda's strength and determination, they realized how little they themselves were actually putting forth in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

After two full weeks Prabhupāda's fever finally broke. A great ordeal was now over. The monsoon was ending, but the same problems of temple construction persisted.

And so did Prabhupāda's determination. His disciples also felt determined, and they resolved to work through all the bureaucratic delays and slow labor conditions. Now no one was going to neglect spiritual regulation.

Prabhupāda spoke no more about his illness, and devotees around the world were informed of his improvement; they could stop the emergency kīrtanas and go on with work as usual. Prabhupāda also resumed his usual duties regarding the temple construction.

One thing was clear, however: Prabhupāda was completely spiritual. And the devotees working with him had engaged in a spiritual contract, a contract based on love and trust. He was taking their karma, and they had promised to follow his instructions. Now, despite his disappointment in them for their failures, that contract was still in order. If he continued to give his causeless mercy, then they could carry out his orders. Otherwise they were without spiritual strength. For Prabhupāda there was never a question of not continuing. Even when he had suffered illness on his disciples' account, he had never thought to abandon them.

After more than two weeks of not translating, Prabhupāda resumed his work. He had been working quickly on the Caitanya-caritāmṛta and was up to the discussions between Lord Caitanya and Sanātana Gosvāmī in Madhya-līlā. Taking up where he had left off, Prabhupāda again began rising early and studying the Bengali translations and commentaries. He would turn on his dictating machine and begin to speak, his voice a faint, harsh whisper. But as he continued his voice grew stronger, until by the end of an hour he was speaking normally. By the time he left Vṛndāvana he was working unusually fast, producing two tapes a day.

* * *

Bombay

From November 1974 through January 1975 Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed in Bombay. During this time he persistently but patiently tried to obtain the No-Objection Certificate, which would enable him to start construction of Rādhā-Rāsavihārī's beautiful temple. His close involvement with this project impressed Girirāja and others who were dedicating their lives to Hare Krishna Land. As Śrīla Prabhupāda had written in Bhagavad-gītā, "One has no goal in life save and except acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness just to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. And, while working in that way, one should think of Kṛṣṇa only: "I have been appointed to discharge this particular duty by Kṛṣṇa.' While acting in such a way, one naturally has to think of Kṛṣṇa... That order of Kṛṣṇa comes through disciplic succession from the bona fide spiritual master."

To serve in a particular project, dedicating oneself to giving the local people Kṛṣṇa consciousness, was an opportunity Śrīla Prabhupāda offered every disciple. His field was the entire world, and he was like an emperor who wanted to award vast lands to loyal sons. But his awarding of lands and projects was not for material ownership (which is always illusory) but for service to the Lord. Kṛṣṇa was the proprietor of everything; therefore a preacher could remain in a particular area of Kṛṣṇa's domain and try to free the residents from the clutches of māyā. Hare Krishna Land in Bombay was one of Prabhupāda's major plans, but it was only gradually evolving, as if Kṛṣṇa first wanted to see the devotees pass many tests of obedience to Prabhupāda's order before allowing the project to manifest.

Although ISKCON owned a half-dozen tenement buildings on the Juhu land, law prohibited them from evicting any of the tenants. But no law said that the owner could not add another story onto his buildings. So Śrīla Prabhupāda had requested Mr. Sethi, a loyal life member and a construction contractor, to build rooms on the top of at least two of the tenement buildings. Eagerly, Mr. Sethi had undertaken this order and had obtained permission for the construction.

Now that the work was completed, the rooms were being used for brahmacārī quarters, offices, and book storage. At last the devotees had vacated the straw huts that had been their residence from their first days on the land. This move not only relieved them from living in nasty, rat-infested quarters, but also allowed them to tear down the huts. And demolition of the huts had been a stipulation before the city would issue the NOC.

Another major objection from the city had been that the temple's bhajana would create a nuisance, and that point had to be satisfied first and foremost. When the police saw Prabhupāda's drawing of the projected temple and hotel, they admitted that within such a big temple the kīrtana would not create as much noise as it did at present. So they agreed to accept the master plan for Hare Krishna Land and remove their objections based on "nuisance," provided ISKCON tear down the straw huts and widen the access road so the tenants could approach the back portion of the land. Each of these legal demands involved many detailed points of contention; it was like a long, drawn-out chess game. But Prabhupāda was experienced, cautious, and determined. He proposed to stay at Hare Krishna Land for several months to help Girirāja, Mr. Sethi, and the others.

Meanwhile, Prabhupāda insisted that the spiritual program at Hare Krishna Land go forward unabated. Even without a permanent temple, five to seven hundred guests were coming for the Sunday feasts. Girirāja had reported to Prabhupāda that Janmāṣṭamī in Bombay had been a great success, with several thousand people coming to see the Deities and take prasādam.

For Śrīla Prabhupāda, who was now accustomed to staying in places like New York or Los Angeles for a week or less, to stay in Bombay for a three-month period confirmed again that Hare Krishna Land was very dear to him. It was his special child. When danger threatened, he became alarmed and protective, and when success came, he was very proud and wanted to tell the world.

Prabhupāda seemed satisfied that at least some construction was always going on. He asked that Mr. Sethi build a brick wall around the property, even though parts of the wall were sometimes torn down at night by guṇḍās. "Build something," Prabhupāda said, "even if it is just one brick, but go ahead with construction." Just as when, in acquiring the Bombay property, Prabhupāda had understood the great value of possession even before attaining the deed, so with construction he insisted they go ahead, even without full permission. "The work must begin," Prabhupāda said, "whether you have got sufficient men and bricks or not. Begin even little, little, so it can be understood that we have begun."

Śrīla Prabhupāda had received word from Vṛndāvana that the newly elected governor of Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Channa Reddy, had visited the temple site. Hearing this, Prabhupāda decided to invite him for the rescheduled opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir.

Your Excellency:

...Tentatively the date is fixed up on Sri Ram Navami, the Birthday of Lord Ramachandra. Probably it will be the fixed up date because we are depending on the progress of the construction work. If you kindly give me your consent, we can print your Excellency's name on the invitation card as the Chief Guest and Inaugurator of the temple.

You are already our member as well as a great devotee of Lord Krishna, so we shall feel it a great privilege if you kindly agree to this proposal.

Prabhupāda followed his invitation to the governor with a letter to Surabhi in Vṛndāvana.

...Everything must be cent per cent completed by the end of March. Is the contractor cheating? That means it will never be finished. Simply we have to put money. From the photos I have seen, there is not very much progress. What to do?

I want no explanations. I want to see everything finished. If there is still doubt please tell me frankly.

Invitations were coming in for Śrīla Prabhupāda to travel to different places, and another world tour was developing. Prabhupāda wrote to Hṛdayānanda Goswami, who was inviting him to visit Mexico City and Caracas.

...Yes I want to come there very much. Now we are in Bombay trying to get permission from the government to build our temple. And it appears that we will possibly be getting the permission next week. If this works out then I will immediately be going to Honolulu and from Honolulu I can go directly to Mexico City, then Caracas, and then to Australia by the end of Jan. If the Bombay situation is not settled up I may have to stay till mid-Jan. or so and then in mid or end of Jan. I will be going to Australia to stay for one month.

By mid-January of 1975 the city finally issued the NOC. Prabhupāda was jubilant and immediately called for a cornerstone-laying ceremony. He had already held a ground-breaking and cornerstone-laying ceremony in March 1972, on first moving to the land. Nevertheless, he wanted another one, as this would actually signify the beginning of the construction of the temple. He therefore devised a festival involving all life members and friends of ISKCON in Bombay.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was ready to travel, and this time, more than ever, he impressed on his leaders in Bombay that the temple construction should go ahead without interruption. No doubt there would be new opposition from the government. But such opposition would be overcome, as in the past, by Kṛṣṇa's grace. The devotees, however, would have to be very determined. This was the reward of working for Prabhupāda in Hare Krishna Land—that one gained determination in the face of trouble and knew that by staying with one's service he was pleasing Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee.

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During February and March of 1975, Śrīla Prabhupāda toured widely again, traveling eastward via Tokyo and Hawaii to Los Angeles. While traveling, he received word that Governor Reddy had accepted the invitation to attend the Vṛndāvana temple opening on Rāma-navamī. He also received an encouraging report from Surabhi, assuring him that this time the temple opening would definitely take place. "I am encouraged that you expect to have everything completed on time," Prabhupāda wrote. "This I want."

Prabhupāda traveled to Mexico City and Caracas. Again, in answering his mail, he was saying he would soon meet everyone in Vṛndāvana. To an Indian life member who wrote him for advice in touring foreign temples, he wrote,

By the 20th of March I will be in Calcutta and you can see me there. I shall advise you personally. You are also invited to participate in our Mayapur festival during Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance day ceremony, as well as the opening celebration of Krishna-Balaram temple in Vrindaban on Rama-Navami day. The Governor of U.P. will also come there to participate and many other important and respectable gentlemen will also be coming. I hope you will also come with your wife and son and mother, and encourage us by taking part in the festival.

Leaving South America, Prabhupāda moved quickly, stopping in Miami, Atlanta, Dallas, and New York—all within a month of his departure from India. He then went to London, stopped in Tehran, and returned to India on March 16. It was Prabhupāda's eighth trip around the world in ten years.

Early in the morning of March 23, Śrīla Prabhupāda left the Calcutta temple for Māyāpur, traveling in a caravan of five cars. Prabhupāda was in the first car, three following cars carried his sannyāsī disciples, and the last car carried his sister, Bhavatārīṇī, and other ladies. As usual, Prabhupāda asked to stop at the mango orchard.

Daivi-śakti dāsī: They all sat around together, just like cowherd boys, Prabhupāda in the center taking his breakfast fruits. It was Ekādaśī, and I had made a cake for Prabhupāda out of dates and coconut—very fancy. When Prabhupāda opened his tiffin and saw it, he said, “Oh, what is this? Who has made this?” So Acyutānanda Swami told him I had made it, and he started eating it right away. Prabhupāda said he liked it. Then they washed their hands, and we were on our way again to Māyāpur.

Māyāpur

March 23, 1975

For this year's festival, almost five hundred devotees from around the world had gathered, and Prabhupāda—while taking his morning walks in the nearby fields, while entering the temple of Rādhā-Mādhava, or while lecturing from the Caitanya-caritāmṛta—was the central attractive feature. Each morning after giving the class, he would circumambulate the temple room, followed by his disciples. A brass bell hung from the ceiling on either side of the Deities' altar, and Prabhupāda, while circumambulating the Deities, would go up to one of the bells and ring it several times, pulling the rope while the kīrtana continued wildly. Then, with cane in hand, he would walk around the back of the Deity altar and emerge on the other side to ring the other bell.

The devotees would jump up and down close around him, singing Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Smiling with great pleasure, Prabhupāda would continue the length of the temple room, past the pictures of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, then come around and up the other side of the temple room to the first bell again and strongly ring it. After half a dozen such blissful circumambulations, he would leave the temple, while the kīrtana continued to roar. Coming out into the bright morning sunshine, he would walk up the broad staircase to his room.

On at least two occasions during that festival, Prabhupāda became stunned in trance while delivering the morning lecture. One time he was speaking in appreciation of the sacrifice of his

disciples, who had spent so much money and come so far from their homes in America, Europe, and Australia to render service and attend the festival in Māyāpur. "You are all young," he was saying. "You have a good opportunity. But I am an old man. I have no opportunity..."

And with these words he suddenly fell completely silent. Such silence before five hundred disciples produced a feeling of suspended time. Everyone waited. Finally, one of the devotees began chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to external consciousness, uttering, "Hare Kṛṣṇa." He told the devotees, "Have kīrtana," and went to his room.

Prabhupāda again supervised the annual meeting of his Governing Body Commission and personally approved or modified all their decisions. ISKCON was indeed growing, but as Prabhupāda had told his friend, the aged Gopala Acarya, in Madras, "Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's institution are nondifferent. If the devotees are thinking of Kṛṣṇa's institution, they will not forget Kṛṣṇa."

By insisting on the devotees' participation in the annual India pilgrimage, Prabhupāda was solidifying the spiritual basis of ISKCON, his transcendental institution. To gather his devotees like this was the reason he had prayed and struggled to erect centers in the dhāmas. He wanted to extend the purifying shelter of Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana to all his followers, now and in the future. Bit by bit, the plan was coming together; the whole world was being saved by Lord Caitanya's movement.

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Vṛndāvana

April 16

When Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived to finally conduct the Krishna-Balaram Mandir opening, he was pleasantly surprised to see the three tall domes rising over the temple. The domes had been constructed entirely during the eight months since his last visit. The four-story international guesthouse had also been completely built during his absence. Surabhi had supervised workers in day and night shifts to get everything done on time.

The tall central dome and two side domes, one over each altar, were magnificent. Their graceful form led the mind to higher thoughts and suggested an existence beyond the material world. The strength and beauty of the domes reminded one that beneath resided the Deity of the Supreme Lord. A temple was to enlighten people, to remove their nescience, and the domes eloquently spoke of this purpose. They could be seen for miles, rising boldly above the landscape of Vṛndāvana, proclaiming the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

Each dome was topped by a copper kalaśa consisting of three balls (representing the lower, middle, and higher planets), and at the top, the eternal Sudarśana cakra, the spinning wheel-weapon of Lord Viṣṇu. The Sudarśana cakra was Kṛṣṇa Himself, and just to see this glorious symbol atop the mandira made the devotees feel victorious and satisfied. Even the guests could not help but regard it with awe. Atop the Sudarśana cakras were copper victory flags.

As Prabhupāda toured the completed building, he continually looked up at the domes. "Oh," he said, "the domes have come out very nice. What do you think?" He turned to the devotees accompanying him.

"They are magnificent!" said Hamsadūta.

"Yes, Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, "I think that Surabhi has done a nice job."

"Yes." Prabhupāda smiled. "Everyone is telling how nice Surabhi is doing." Prabhupāda turned to Surabhi, who had gone with little sleep for weeks. "But I can't say that. Only me—I am criticizing you, because that is my job. I have to always criticize the disciple."

No less than six hundred devotees from ISKCON centers around the world had come to Vṛndāvana as part of the annual Indian pilgrimage. The high point was to be the installation of the Deities and the opening of the temple. Final preparations were going furiously—cleanups, decorations, cooking. Many important life members and guests had come and were staying in their private rooms in the forty-room guesthouse Prabhupāda's vision had finally come to pass. He had created probably the most beautiful and opulent temple in Vṛndāvana—certainly the one most alive with dynamic devotion and preaching spirit—and along with it he had built one of the best local hotels, for visitors with an eye for kṛṣṇa-bhakti.

Touring the grounds, Prabhupāda walked into the sunken courtyard, its marble floor clean and dazzling. This was no rented house in America, something built for another purpose—it was a temple, like the temples in Vaikuṇṭha described in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. "It is heaven on earth," Prabhupāda said. "I think it surpasses all the temples in India."

Prabhupāda stood smiling before the tamāla tree, its venerable branches spread throughout one corner of the courtyard, and he recounted how there had been a discussion of cutting it down and he had prevented it. Tamāla trees are associated with the pastimes of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and are very rare. In Vṛndāvana there were perhaps only three: one here, one at Seva-kuṅja, and one in the courtyard of the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. That the tamāla tree was growing so luxuriantly, Prabhupāda said, indicated that the devotees were performing genuine bhakti.

Convinced that the temple was actually ready, Prabhupāda entered his residence, just between the temple and the guesthouse. Many details demanded his attention, and many visiting disciples were present.

Thus in Ramaṇa-reti, in a place where there was no temple, a pure devotee desired, "Let there be a temple, and sevā, devotional service." And what had once been an empty lot was now a place of pilgrimage. Such is the power of the desires of the pure devotee.

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EPILOGUE

Śrīla Prabhupāda would often say of his devotional service in India, “Vṛndāvana is my residence, Bombay is my office, and Māyāpur is where I worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

Bombay is the biggest commercial city in India. Prabhupāda's “business” was pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, and in Bombay he dealt more with the managerial aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in India. He had incorporated ISKCON in India with the main branch in Bombay. All other branches of ISKCON in India, therefore, were legally part of the Bombay incorporation. In Bombay, Prabhupāda had cultivated more lawyers and businessmen as life members and earned more friends of his Society than in any other city in India. So whenever he was in Bombay, he often sought legal advice, not just about the Bombay center but also about his other affairs in India.

Since Bombay was a modern city with professional and office facilities on a level with many Western cities, Prabhupāda wanted to locate the Indian division of his Book Trust there, for printing Hindi translations of his books as well as English versions for the Indian market. Bombay, unlike Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur, was not a dhāma but a bustling, wealthy city. ISKCON's biggest donors lived there. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's demeanor was entirely transcendental in Bombay, and his activities were often the same as elsewhere—speaking on Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and worshiping the Deity—nevertheless, Prabhupāda called it his office. And though it was his office, he wanted a temple there.

“Māyāpur,” Prabhupāda said, “is where I worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” Prabhupāda conceived of a temple to be built in Māyāpur that would be the grandest of all temples in his movement. He and his devotees would worship the Supreme Lord there in such a magnificent style that the whole world would be attracted to Prabhupāda's place of worship, the Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir.

According to the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the prescribed worship for this age is saṅkīrtana, the chanting of the holy names of God. Saṅkīrtana worship emanated from Māyāpur, the original dhāma of Lord Caitanya. “In the age of Kali,” states Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, “Lord Kṛṣṇa appears in a golden form, as Lord Caitanya, and His activity is to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. People with sufficient intelligence will worship Him in this form.” Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to make the most wonderful worship of Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His birthplace and thus completely fulfill the predictions of the previous ācāryas, who foresaw a great Vedic city rising from the plains of Navadvīpa.

Māyāpur could also be considered Prabhupāda's place of worship because his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, had preached extensively there and because his samādhi was there. Since Śrīla Prabhupāda's entire preaching mission was in the service of his spiritual master, he worshiped his spiritual master through preaching in Māyāpur. Māyāpur was the origin and symbol of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because there Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda actually began the saṅkīrtana movement that Prabhupāda was now carrying all over the world.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to preach the saṅkīrtana movement of love of Kṛṣṇa throughout the entire world, and therefore during His presence He inspired the saṅkīrtana movement. Specifically, He sent Rūpa Gosvāmī to Vṛndāvana and Nityānanda to Bengal and personally went to South India. In this way He kindly left the task of preaching His cult in the rest of the world to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Vṛndāvana is Prabhupāda's residence. Religious people in India as well as religious scholars in the West saw Prabhupāda as a Vaiṣṇava sādhu—from Vṛndāvana. When he began his preaching in New York City, he would often introduce himself as “coming from Vṛndāvana.” “Here I am now sitting in New York,” he once said, “the world's greatest city, but my heart is always hankering after that Vṛndāvana. I shall be very happy to return to my Vṛndāvana, that sacred place.”

The people of Vṛndāvana also thought of Prabhupāda as their hometown success. Upon retiring from family life in 1954, Prabhupāda had gone to live in Vṛndāvana, first at a temple near Keśi-ghāṭa and then at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. After taking sannyāsa in 1959, he had continued to reside in Vṛndāvana and, when not living there, to reserve his two rooms at Rādhā-Dāmodara.

Vṛndāvana is the home of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the place of Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes, the place where the six Gosvāmīs, sent by Lord Caitanya, had excavated holy places, written transcendental literature, and built temples. Any devotee could feel at home there, and thousands of Vṛndāvana's residents carried bead bags, chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, and wore the Vaiṣṇava tilaka and dress. Vṛndāvana belonged to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and this was still acknowledged by the residents of the present-day Vṛndāvana.

Ultimately, Vṛndāvana is revealed only to the pure devotee. Vṛndāvana is the eternal residence of all spiritual souls in their eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The Vṛndāvana in India is a transcendental replica of Goloka Vṛndāvana, the eternal planet where Kṛṣṇa resides in the spiritual world. The pure devotees aspire to attain to Goloka Vṛndāvana after finishing their life in this world, and Prabhupāda, therefore, as a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, naturally felt at home in Vṛndāvana. He sometimes said that if he were to become very ill, he would prefer not to go to a hospital but to simply go to Vṛndāvana and there pass his last days. To spread the glories of Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda had left Vṛndāvana, but like a traveler away from home, he always thought of returning.

SPL 45: Please Distribute Books

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Please Distribute Books

= San Francisco

July 5, 1970

Śrīla Prabhupāda was attending the 1970 Ratha-yātrā in San Francisco. The day was cold and windy, and about ten thousand people had joined in Lord Jagannātha's procession through Golden Gate Park. Śrīla Prabhupāda had danced in the street with thousands of participants during the parade, addressed a large crowd in an auditorium by the beach, and looked on as his disciples had distributed a free vegetarian prasādam feast to thousands. But when a devotee arrived with a half-dozen advance copies of Volume One of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared especially pleased.

Surrounded by devotees and curious festival-goers, Śrīla Prabhupāda held one of the books, admiring the front cover, with its full-color picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The volume was big, almost seven-and-a-half by ten-and-a-half inches, and its dust jacket shone, silver with large bright red letters: "KṚṢṆA." It was a transcendental wonder in Śrīla Prabhupāda's reverent hands.

Onlookers could barely restrain themselves from pressing in against Śrīla Prabhupāda to peer over his shoulders. And they didn't restrain their exclamations when Prabhupāda smiled and opened the volume. He examined the illustrations, the print, the paper, and the binding. "Very nice," he said. He fixed his attention on a page, reading. Then he looked up and announced that this greatly valuable book, Kṛṣṇa, had just arrived and that everyone should read it. Holding one book in his hand, with the other copies stacked before him, he said that anyone who so desired should come forward and buy a copy.

People began clamoring, and hands with ten-dollar bills thrust forward, while voices cried out, begging for a copy. And Prabhupāda promptly sold every book, not even keeping one for himself.

For the devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda's selling of the Kṛṣṇa book was the most spectacular event of the Ratha-yatra festival. They pored over the purchased books in groups, discussing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and the effect they would have on the people of America.

Brahmānanda told how in 1967 Prabhupāda had given away his advance copy of Teachings of Lord Caitanya in his room at 26 Second Avenue in New York City. Just before that book had arrived, Śrīla Prabhupāda had been sitting and talking with Satyavrata, a disciple who had previously stopped coming to the temple due to petty quarreling with his Godbrothers. When the copy of Teachings of Lord Caitanya had arrived, Śrīla Prabhupāda had lovingly inspected it and had then offered it to Satyavrata as a gift.

Brahmānanda had been astounded to see Śrīla Prabhupāda give away his only copy of the book. Having helped publish the book, Brahmānanda knew how painstakingly Prabhupāda had written it and how he had anxiously waited one year for the book to finally see print. Yet once it had arrived, he had immediately given it away, and to a disciple who was not even in good standing. Satyavrata had taken the book, thanked Śrīla Prabhupāda, and left, never to be seen again.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted his disciples to be as eager to distribute Kṛṣṇa conscious literature as he was, none of them knew how to do it. Distributing a magazine and asking for a small donation was one thing—but a big, hardbound book? When the entire shipment of Teachings of Lord Caitanya had arrived in New York in April of 1967, the devotees had hired a truck, picked up the books at the dock, and unloaded them at 26 Second Avenue. They had then shipped them to ISKCON centers in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Montreal, and elsewhere. And there they remained.

Some devotees had tried placing ads in magazines and leaving books in book stores on consignment. But the books didn't sell. How to sell these big, hardbound books remained a mystery—until something significant happened, an accidental discovery.

One day in 1971, while driving back to the temple after chanting in downtown San Francisco, two brahmacārīs stopped at a local service station for gas. When the attendant came to the window for money, one of the devotees showed him a Kṛṣṇa book. The attendant seemed interested, and the two devotees began preaching the glories of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When they suggested he take the book as payment for the gas, he agreed.

Astonished at what had happened and inspired at their success, the two brahmacārīs went the next day with several Kṛṣṇa books and stood in front of a grocery store. And again it happened; this time they sold two books.

Keśava, the San Francisco temple president, phoned his G.B.C. supervisor (and brother), Karandhara, in Los Angeles to tell him what had happened. "It's like a miracle!" Keśava exclaimed. Karandhara encouraged him to experiment further, and soon the San Francisco temple had half a dozen men going from door to door showing the books to people in their homes. When Buddhimanta began selling as many as five books in a day, the devotees in other temples, especially Los Angeles, San Diego, and Denver, wanted to follow his example. And whoever tried it and sold a book became caught up in a euphoric excitement.

The experience and testimonies of devotees selling Śrīla Prabhupāda's books describe a special taste, distinct from the happiness young men might ordinarily experience by stumbling upon a sales technique and finding themselves on the verge of making a lot of money. The difference is that the devotees' book distribution, being devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, produces an ecstasy that is transcendental, an ecstasy far beyond even the greatest material happiness.

Ordinary business and the business of selling Kṛṣṇa conscious literature are as different as material life from spiritual life. And anyone observing spiritual life from the material point of view will not understand it. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī has compared such empirical attempts to understand the ecstasy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness with attempts to taste honey by licking the outside of the bottle.

The young men and women beginning to distribute books in America knew that Śrīla Prabhupāda, by giving them Kṛṣṇa consciousness, had saved them from hellish life, and they wanted to help him give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. And such preaching, by distributing his books, was ecstasy, spiritual ecstasy.

By mid-1971, the temples were selling hundreds of Kṛṣṇa books a week. Karandhara, Prabhupāda's Book Fund manager, began sending saṅkīrtana newsletters to the North American temples and to Śrīla Prabhupāda. By listing the monthly results of each temple's book distribution, the newsletters incited competition. Karandhara's December 1971 newsletter summed up the mood of the year and urged the devotees to increase.

Recently, in an all out program to sell books, the San Francisco Temple has been averaging 20 Krishna Books per day distribution. What is their technique? Keshava Prabhu says, "Simply we make it our priority activity. All you have to do is want to do it and then try as hard as you can. Everywhere we go, we carry BTGs and Krishna books," he says, "on street SKP, door to door, to the laundromat, to the store, everywhere." We have been taxing our brains in so many fancy and complicated ways to try to increase sales, but as it has been experienced, nothing is more successful

than simply taking the books personally in hand and going door to door with this Causeless Mercy. Just consider, how many hours a day do we spend specifically trying to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda's literature, which is the dearest thing to him?

The crowning touch to end the year's sankīrtana however, came not from the newsletter but from Prabhupāda himself, who wrote to Keśava, the “king” of Kṛṣṇa book distribution,

I have been receiving so many reports about how my disciples from the San Francisco Temple cannot be surpassed by anyone in distributing my books. Sometimes they are selling as many as 70 Krishna books daily. So if this is true, then certainly when I return to the U.S. I must come and stay in your Temple. By distributing my books profusely you are giving me great encouragement to translate. And you are all helping me to fulfill the order which Guru Maharaj gave me. So I am so much grateful to you, and I am sure Krishna will bless you a million times over for doing this work.

I hope that you and all my beloved disciples in San Francisco Temple are in strong health and jolly mood.

Copies of this letter went out to every ISKCON center. Prabhupāda had always given his blessings to all the devotees, but never before could anyone recall his saying a devotee would get Kṛṣṇa's blessings “a million times over”!

Although a letter from Prabhupāda usually instructed a specific devotee, the instruction often had universal application; and Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters made clear his disciples' top priority: book distribution.

I am very pleased to hear that you are increasing in your distribution of our books and magazines. This is a good sign that your preaching work is also strong. The more you increase your strength in preaching, the more you will go on selling books. I want especially that my books be distributed widely.

Prabhupāda's ambition was to replace mundane literature with transcendental. At least in every home there should be one piece of Kṛṣṇa conscious literature, he reasoned, because if a person read only one page, his life could be turned toward perfection. “If one percent of the readers become devotees,” he wrote, “that will change the world.” Whereas mail-order advertisers were satisfied with a five-percent response, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke of an even smaller percentage—one percent—whom he thought could become pure devotees in response to receiving a book. Lord Kṛṣṇa also confirms this in Bhagavad-gītā: “Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth.” To make the world Kṛṣṇa conscious, therefore, would require that millions of pieces of transcendental literature be distributed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted his disciples to understand why they should distribute his books, and he instructed them through his letters.

Who God is can be summed up in only five words—Krishna is the Supreme Controller. If you become convinced of this and preach it enthusiastically, success is assured, and you will be doing the greatest service for all living entities.

He wrote to Jayādvaita,

These books and magazines are our most important propaganda weapons to defeat the ignorance of maya's army, and the more we produce such literature and sell them profusely all over the world, the more we shall deliver the world from the suicide course.

To Jagadīśa he wrote,

I am encouraged to see your report of books sold, because it proves that you consider it your responsibility to see that more and more people are reading our literature. Actually, this is the solid basis for our preaching work—no other movement has got such profuse authority for preaching. And if someone reads our Krishna conscious philosophy, he becomes convinced.

Prabhupāda continued to insist that all major Kṛṣṇa conscious programs be maintained, including Deity worship, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in public, and holding outside lectures. All programs were important. But book distribution, whenever possible, should accompany the other programs. To a sannyāsī whose main program was public lecturing, Prabhupāda wrote,

Distribute books, as many as possible. If anyone hears some philosophy from us, that will help him. But if he purchases one book, that may turn his life. So selling books is the best preaching activity. Sell books, hold the kirtan in public places like schools and colleges, preach.

And in a letter to Bhagavān dāsa in France, he stressed the same thing: "What will your three minutes preaching do? But if they buy one book, it may turn their life."

* * *

During this period of increasing book distribution, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's newly initiated sannyāsīs concocted the idea that the devotees should spend much more time studying. While visiting the New York temple, this sannyāsī openly advocated that devotees read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books five to eight hours daily. The temple was following a new schedule Śrīla Prabhupāda had set up, with devotees attending the morning program, going out all day for street chanting and book distribution, and returning in the evening for a class on Bhagavad-gītā. But now controversy arose, and an urgent phone call was placed to Śrīla Prabhupāda in Los Angeles. When Prabhupāda heard the details from his secretary, he immediately responded.

My reply is that this sankirtan or street chanting must go on; it is our most important program. Lord Chaitanya's movement means the sankirtan movement. You may simply take two hours for chanting sixteen rounds daily, two hours for reading congregationally, and balance of time go out for sankirtan. We must do both, reading books and distributing books, but distributing books is the main propaganda. Reading in class for two hours is sufficient, and other reading can be done in

spare time if one has got it. It is not that one has to be always reading. One hour a morning for Bhāgavata class and one hour evening, either Bhagavad-gītā or Nectar of Devotion, that is sufficient.

* * *

January 1972

"You should always think of new outlets for distributing my books," Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Jagadīśa. And new outlets the devotees found —shopping centers, malls, parking lots. They were meeting more people than ever before.

By entering the malls and shopping centers, the devotees plunged into the heart of American society, meeting pious and impious, rich and poor, black and white. Book-selling was still difficult, but the devotees persevered, carrying their heavy book bags and distributing the literature they knew could solve all problems.

The devotees saw the shoppers as so many walking victims of the material energy, people living for sensual and mental pleasure and therefore doomed to an inauspicious death. Any serious devotee could philosophically explain from Bhagavad-gītā the predicament of the materialist, but now they were directly witnessing this plight. And by Prabhupāda's mercy, they were working hard to deliver the missing essence of transcendental knowledge to the bewildered souls.

Then came the discovery of traveling from town to town to sell books. Some of the brahmacārīs in Los Angeles had been feeling that by staying in the temple they were wasting time they could be using for book distribution. So they loaded a van with Kṛṣṇa books and went to areas where they could camp for a week, live a simpler life, and distribute books as many hours a day as they liked. This "traveling saṅkīrtana" produced another significant increase by creating an environment wherein the men could become fully absorbed in their work. The new program spread quickly throughout the ISKCON world, and Śrīla Prabhupāda liked it.

I am very glad to hear from you the wonderful news of traveling party in England. I think the people of that place are becoming more and more inclined for this Krishna Consciousness movement. They are inviting you to stay at their houses, they are taking books, becoming sometimes devotees—all of these are very encouraging signs to me. Simply go on in this way, stopping in every village and city in England, Scotland, or if there are other places, like Ireland. Simply stop for some time, distribute books and hold Sankirtan procession, answer their questions, give some leaflets or small informations freely, distribute prasadam wherever possible, at least some small thing, and if there is some genuine interest being shown, then request the townspeople to arrange some engagements for speaking in their schools or in someone's home or a hall, like that. In this way remain always without anxiety for destination and comfortable situations, always relying only on the mercy of Krishna for your plan. Just go on preaching His message and selling His books wherever there is interest. We shall not waste time if there is no interest or if people are unfriendly; there are so many places to go.

Śrīla Prabhupāda began saying that opening new centers was less important now that the traveling parties were combing the country. When he heard that the temple president in Vancouver had acquired a bus for traveling, he wrote,

I think we are becoming like a gigantic guerilla warfare movement fighting with maya. This traveling in buses is the best means to drive away maya and establish Krishna Consciousness all over the world.

Prabhupāda was glad to hear that temple presidents and zonal leaders were also going out with the traveling saṅkīrtana parties. The Vedic concept of the commander, he said, is that he must fight in the front lines, not sit behind the scenes, sheltered. Having already witnessed how some of his leading disciples had become bogged down by managing many things, he advised them all to travel and preach, distributing literature wherever they went.

Practically, this ISKCON organization is there because I have been always traveling. I never sat down in my old age, no. So you follow my example and preach widely all over the world. That is Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's version.

When a devotee in California wrote Śrīla Prabhupāda for permission to give up married life and go on traveling saṅkīrtana, Prabhupāda replied that to give up family life was not necessary. Lord Caitanya had taught that being a sannyāsī or a gr̥hastha did not matter as long as one fully served Kṛṣṇa. A householder could also sometimes travel and distribute books, with or without his wife.

Near the end of 1972, the BBT newsletter, now compiled by Karandhara's assistant, Rāmeśvara, reported the ever-increasing results of book distribution.

Book Distribution continues soaring to all-time highs, as more than 25 Traveling SKP Parties roam the countryside, affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands of conditioned souls! Since mid-September we have distributed over 15,000 complete KRSNA TRILOGY SETS! And since mid-August we have distributed over 9,000 SOFT BHAGAVAD GITAS and over 950 HARD BHAGAVAD GITAS! Macmillan too has completely sold out (20,000 GITAS sold commercially) and is reprinting large quantities for the Christmas rush!

Another breakthrough for book distribution came at the end of 1972. The previous year devotees had taken advantage of the Christmas season by selling the Kṛṣṇa book door to door, but no one had been aware just how significant the Christmas season could actually be.

Rāmeśvara: It was on December 22, 1972, that we accidentally discovered the Christmas marathon in Los Angeles. Of course, we noticed a great increase in the number of people going into the stores, and the stores were staying open sometimes until midnight. I was standing in front of a Burbank Zody's. We were having an intense competition with prizes in Los Angeles, and it was building up to a feverish pitch.

So after distributing madly all day long, I had collected about \$350 and had distributed 650 magazines. It was about ten o'clock at night. I was convinced this was the new world's record in ISKCON and that nobody was possibly going to beat me this day. Even though the store was open

until twelve, business had started slowing off; and I was thinking, "Maybe I should go back. Undoubtedly everyone is back already. No one has ever stayed out past eight o'clock. They'll all be waiting up for me. I shouldn't keep them waiting up." So in this way my mind was convincing me to go back.

By eleven o'clock the store was completely dead. I got in the car and started driving back. On the way back I passed another Zody's, called Hollywood Zody's, on Sunset and Western. I was torn whether to stop or not, because that store was crowded and was going to be open until midnight. But I decided, "No, I'll go back, because the other devotees will be waiting up to see how many books I distributed." So I just kept driving.

I finally arrived at the temple at about ten minutes to twelve, and I burst into the saṅkīrtana room. But the only person there was the secretary, Madhukāṇṭha. I said, "Oh, no. Everyone went to bed?" He said, "No, nobody is back yet." I was the first one back! That was the discovery of the first Christmas marathon. It was completely unplanned. No one had ever instructed anyone to stay out that late. We just did it spontaneously.

Finally, at about one-thirty in the morning, all the devotees had returned, and we were all sitting around looking at the saṅkīrtana map. We couldn't sleep, we were so excited to go out. We were thinking, "Where can we find plenty of conditioned souls to distribute books to?" Our noise and raucous laughter was like a drunken party, and it woke up Karandhara, who was sleeping in his office in the next room. He came stumbling in, wiping the sleep from his eyes, but when he saw us and saw what was going on, he burst out laughing and sent us all to bed, saying, "Get ready for tomorrow." So in this way we performed the three-day marathon—December 22, 23, and 24.

No one had ever distributed as many books before in the history of our movement. A big day had been considered to be somewhere between twenty-five and forty books. But we were distributing between five thousand and six thousand pieces of literature a day for a three-day period. One temple had distributed almost eighteen thousand pieces of literature in just three days.

At this time Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Bombay, where his attempt to secure the land in Juhu had become entangling. The landlord was now refusing to sell the property and was trying to evict the devotees, even though Śrīla Prabhupāda had already installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on the land. Although these matters were causing Śrīla Prabhupāda anxiety, he continued his usual daily duties: taking his morning walk, lecturing in the evening from *The Nectar of Devotion*, corresponding with and receiving news from his centers around the world, even organizing a Bombay paṇḍāl festival for January.

When Prabhupāda received news of the book distribution in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the United States, he was very pleased and amazed. Although involved with many affairs from throughout the world, he put them aside and relished the overwhelming victory of book distribution in America. Immediately he called in his personal secretary and dictated letters.

My dear Ramesvar,

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated December 27, 1972, and with great happiness I have read your figures of amount of books sold during three-day period, December 22-24, 1972. It is scarcely believable that more than 17,000 books could have been sold by one temple in three days! That indicates to me that people are at last becoming little serious about this Krishna Consciousness movement in your country. Otherwise, why they should buy our books? But they can see that our boys and girls, devotees, are so much sincere and serious to distribute the message of Krishna Consciousness, they are at once struck, by seeing them, and therefore they appreciate and purchase. This is unique in the world. So I am so much pleased upon all of the boys and girls in Los Angeles and all over the world who are understanding and appreciating this unique quality of our transcendental literature, and voluntarily they are going out to distribute despite all circumstances of difficulty. By this effort alone they are assured to go back to home, back to Godhead.

The same day Prabhupāda dictated a letter to Karandhara.

I could never have thought it was possible to distribute so many of our literatures. Therefore I can understand it is simply Krishna's blessing us for your sincerely working on His behalf. Actually, that is the secret of my success, not that personally I have done anything wonderful, but that because those who are helping me are sincere. They have done the work. That is the reason for our success all over the world where others have failed. A little sincerity is very difficult thing in this age of hypocrisy and bluff, but I am so fortunate that Krishna has sent me all of you nice boys and girls who are sincerely working. Please convey to all of them my deepest appreciation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters acknowledging the Christmas marathon and assuring the devotees that they would go back to Godhead sent the book distribution movement flying into the new year with great momentum. Devotees continued to find new ways and places to distribute books. New records were constantly topping the old, and the devotees were making still higher projections for the future.

Rāmeśvara published in his February 1973 newsletter a letter from a college student who had read one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. ISKCON'S mail-order office was receiving hundreds of such letters a month.

Sir:

A couple of weeks ago, devotees of Krishna (from Denver, I understand) were here at the University of Arkansas distributing literature. One young man approached me with a "hard pitch" for my purchasing a copy of the Prabhupāda translation of the Bhagavad-gītā; I was initially quite skeptical (so many people are getting rich from selling their versions of "the answer") and told him to not bother me. He insisted, though, and I finally gave in.

I have been reading the Gītā, having not finished it yet, and have found it quite rewarding; my mind, shaped in logic and empiricism, seems to find itself barely tasting the transcendental material in the book; I discuss it with others; I find myself remembering certain passages...

It has genuinely stimulated my interest, to say the least, in a way that my quite extensive readings in Christianity, Zen Buddhism, the "lower" forms of yoga, etc. have never succeeded in doing.

In short, I think I have finally found the beginning.

Rāmeśvara went on to beat the drum of saṅkīrtana.

Actually no one can properly measure the effect of our book distribution. If it was known how many books we distribute each month we would be listed on every best-seller list in the country! For example, as many of you know, already the new GITA has outsold any other edition of the GITA ever printed. The Macmillan Company has already sold tens of thousands of copies, while we have sold over 27,000 copies ourselves since they first appeared last August.

With increased monies coming into the Book Fund, Śrīla Prabhupāda had approved his trustees' plans to print larger quantities of books and store them in a warehouse, making them available to the temples for distribution throughout the year. Yet keeping up with the temples' demand for books was still difficult, even with a warehouse.

Small, easy-to-sell books like *Beyond Birth and Death*, *On the Way to Kṛṣṇa*, *Rāja-vidyā*, and *The Perfection of Yoga* were printed in the tens of thousands. Distributors would go out, carrying in their book bags a variety of books: Śrī Īsopaniṣad, *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as well as an assortment of small books, *Back to Godhead* magazines, and some inexpensive booklets like *Kṛṣṇa*, *The Reservoir of Pleasure* and *On Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa*.

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Tom Beaudry was living with his wife in Santa Cruz, California. After attending a festival in Berkeley celebrating Lord Caitanya's appearance, where he chanted all day, and after reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā*, he felt he should become Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple. He began chanting and trying to interest his wife and friends in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When a traveling party of brahmacārīs arrived to start a center in Santa Cruz, he told them he wanted to join. But they were skeptical. Then one day he showed up with a shaved head and dhotī.

Tom Beaudry: I began going out every day with the chanting party. Then gradually I began to break away from the kīrtana party to sell small books in shopping centers. One day I came back and one of the brahmacārīs, Sarvabhauma, criticized me. He asked me how many big books I had sold. I said, "I didn't sell any." He said, "How many did you bring with you?" I said, "I didn't have any to bring with me." "Then you're in māyā," he said. "You didn't bring any big books? How do you expect to sell them? Prabhupāda wants these big books sold." So I thought to myself, "Gee, I must be in māyā." I said, "How do you sell these books?" He said, "You pray to Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda gives you the mercy." So I thought, "Well, that makes sense. That's how everything works in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

I went to my house. I thought about it and prayed to Prabhupāda that I could sell these big books. I prayed all evening and then took rest. In the morning I got up, and it was on my mind. So I put out

one big book, Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, in my bag of small books. But in the course of selling the small books, I forgot about the big book.

Suddenly a lady came up to me and said, "What is that big book you have there?" Then I remembered Prabhupāda and my prayers, and I said, "This is the Teachings of Lord Chaitanya." I gave her the book, and she gave me three dollars. When I got back to the temple, I told the devotees how Prabhupāda had sold a book.

Praghoṣa: I was coming regularly to the Detroit temple for classes in the evening, and I was doing some odd work to help the devotees prepare the temple. Every night I would be painting, and I would watch the devotees coming back from saṅkīrtana. They seemed very ecstatic and enlivened, and I was always a little curious about what they did out there that made them come back like this. I would be up on my ladder, painting and listening to them talk as they sat on the floor drinking hot milk. They would talk about how they had knocked on one man's door and this had happened and then that had happened—it was very attractive to me.

After I moved into the temple and had been a devotee about a week, someone asked me if I would like to go out and try distributing books. So I went out, wearing a dhotī and tilaka and using a straightforward presentation, walking up to people, giving them a card and a book, telling them about the contents of the book, showing them Prabhupāda's picture, and asking for a donation. The exhilaration I got from that was just incredible. It became extremely blissful to go out and do this. None of us could actually put a finger on why it was so ecstatic.

We used to lie awake at night. All the brahmacārīs stayed in one big room, and we would lie there on the floor in our sleeping bags, whispering to each other: "What did you say to the people out there?" There would be all these different conversations going on in the room at night, with the lights out and everyone talking, trying to relate how we were presenting Prabhupāda's books.

Jagaddhātṛī-devī dasī: My first service was cleaning the temple. I was cleaning the whole temple. I would be looking out the window at the men piling into the vans getting ready for saṅkīrtana, and I would always think that I would really like to be doing that. Finally our temple formed two traveling parties, one of men and one of women, and we went for the summer to distribute books in the fairs of Washington state. The men and the ladies used to have competition to see who could distribute the most.

Sura: I joined Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Seattle in 1973, and they sent me out on book distribution my first day. We would always hear from Los Angeles about the letters Prabhupāda was sending. Everything we heard was centered on Prabhupāda's desire for his books to be distributed. It was by hearing this that newer devotees wanted to go out and be part of the saṅkīrtana party. We wanted to be soldiers for Prabhupāda's book distribution army.

We went to the Spokane Fair, and the leader of the Spokane temple wrote a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda requesting him to come and telling him the results of our book distribution. Then we received a reply from Prabhupāda saying that he couldn't make it but that the devotees should go to the fair and preach on his behalf. "Fulfill my mission," Prabhupāda said, "that every man and woman in the United States gets a book." That was just what we were waiting for—to get an order

directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda that this was what pleases him. Our book distribution kept increasing, and we just thought we'd never had so much fun before. It wasn't like austerity. Some of the devotees were thinking, "Well, it's really hard to go on saṅkīrtana." We were thinking, "You must be nuts! It's the most fun thing you can do to go on saṅkīrtana and sell books." It was fun, not for sense gratification but for the soul, because of our being linked in service to our spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. I appreciated it in that way. And when I first met Praghōṣa, I could see he was really dedicated and a true lover of Prabhupāda, because he was so dedicated to pleasing Prabhupāda by distributing books.

Praghōṣa: We were distributing in Santa Barbara, California. The area had been worked many times before, and the people were really puffed up. I went there with a couple of brahmacārīs. One day, after trying to distribute for about seven hours, I had only sold one book. I had never before had anything like that happen to me in my whole time as a devotee. I was really working. I never stopped. At one particular point I just couldn't take it any more. I tried to give a book to someone, and they just cracked off to me in a really obnoxious way. I had so much desire, I was trying so hard, that when he did this it just devastated me. I just wanted to punch the guy in the nose. All my intensity came out, and I erupted into tears. I just sat down on an old telephone pole that was lying by the street and started to cry.

Then this devotee walked up and found me sitting there like I had just lost my best friend. He said, "Prabhu, what's the matter?" I said, "I don't know what's the matter. I just can't distribute books. Not one person will take a book. I've been out here for seven hours. Do you know how many books I've distributed? One book." Then he sat down and preached to me and put me back together.

The next day I was really trying to have a better day, and I took my book bag and just ran from one person to another all morning. Then I was showing a book to a girl, and she said she couldn't pay me with money but that she would gladly pay me. I was young and naive, and I didn't know exactly what she was talking about for a minute. Then finally when I realized, I called, "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" and took the book back from her, took off my wig and just bolted to another parking lot. I ran from person to person all day, praying real hard to Kṛṣṇa. By the end of the day I had distributed a large number of books.

Lavaṅga-latikā-devī dāsī: When I first came to Los Angeles, Śrīmatī told me that Śrīla Prabhupāda had said that being in the temple all the time was māyā. Prabhupāda wanted us to go out and distribute BTGs door to door. I learned from the other devotees how to distribute books. There were so many experienced devotees who knew how, so I just followed in their footsteps. I would say what they'd say and do what they'd do. Then it became easy. When a person took a book and gave a donation, I could see it was Lord Caitanya acting. I could see that everything was working under the direction of Kṛṣṇa's internal energy.

Tom Beaudry had moved from Santa Cruz to Los Angeles, and by associating with devotees like Rāmeśvara and other book distributors, he soon became a leader. He was initiated in June 1972 and received the name Tripurāri dāsa. Every day he would go to a supermarket parking lot near the temple and sell a couple hundred copies of *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. One evening at the University of California at Long Beach, he and a few other book distributors dropped in on a lecture given by a popular yoga leader.

Rāmeśvara: I remember when they came back. It was the middle of Bhagavad-gītā class, and I was giving the class in the temple room. All of a sudden the door burst open, and they were standing there. Tripurāri was in his street clothes, and the girls were in their sārīs. They just ran into the temple. You could see that something very special had taken place, because their faces were glowing. They couldn't even speak. They were dazed or stunned. The whole temple was anxious to hear the news, so I quickly finished the class. Then Tripurāri told us that he had just distributed seventeen Bhagavad-gītās—the full, hardbound, unabridged Bhagavad-gītās—in two hours. Līlāśakti had distributed thirteen, Vṛndāvana had distributed eleven, Tilaka had distributed eleven, and Makhana Lāl had distributed nine. Nothing like this had ever been done before. We were all completely astonished that anyone could sell so many big books like that.

One morning a few days later, Tripurāri was driving down the San Diego Freeway to go on traveling saṅkīrtana when he saw the sign for the Los Angeles airport and spontaneously decided to try it. After selling a dozen big books that day, he realized the airport was wonderful for book distribution. He started going out regularly to the airport and was soon distributing thirty to forty books a day, sometimes giving individuals as many as six volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam at once.

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April 11, 1973

Śrīla Prabhupāda flew from New York to Los Angeles, and a crowd of loving devotees greeted him.

Tripurāri: Prabhupāda was arriving at two in the afternoon, and all the devotees were going to meet him. But it was also Easter weekend and a big day for book distribution at the airport. At that time I was the only one working the airport. I was doing rather well and had sold about thirty books by one-thirty. Then I changed into my dhoti and walked over to the arrivals area to meet His Divine Grace. When he entered the terminal building, he looked at me and smiled, and I melted in ecstasy.

We had kīrtana all the way down the stairs, and when we got outside, all the devotees were going back to the temple. Then I thought, "What business do I have going back to the temple and chanting with all the devotees? My business is to stay out and distribute the books. That is my service to Prabhupāda." So I was the only one who didn't return to the temple. I stayed and distributed sixty-seven books. When I got back, I found that Karandhara had told Prabhupāda about me and how I had been distributing books. When I heard that, I became very enthusiastic and continued to distribute books every day that week.

In Los Angeles Śrīla Prabhupāda took his morning walks either at the shore of the Pacific Ocean or in Cheviot Hills Park. Every morning a few disciples would join him, as well as Thoudam Singh, a Ph.D. candidate in organic chemistry at the University of California. Śrīla Prabhupāda would regularly discuss with Dr. Singh the scientific theory of life's originating from matter. Day after day, Prabhupāda would expose Darwin's theory as foolish and unscientific.

The sun would just be appearing on the horizon as Prabhupāda and a small group of disciples walked. The air would be chilly, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would wear his hooded saffron overcoat, while his disciples, wearing sweaters or wool cādars, followed him, listening and asking questions.

Most of the conversation, however, would be between Prabhupāda and Dr. Singh, who played the role of a materialistic scientist. Dr. Singh would present atheistic arguments, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would defeat them with scripture and logic. "I say to the scientists," Prabhupāda said, "if life originated from chemicals, and if your science is so advanced, then why can't you create life biochemically in your laboratories?"

On one of these morning walks, the older devotees introduced Rāmeśvara to Prabhupāda, and at the devotees' request, Rāmeśvara began telling Śrīla Prabhupāda about book distribution. He mentioned that sometimes the distributors would meet impersonalists and convince them to buy a copy of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.

Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped and turned gravely to Rāmeśvara. "What do you say to them?" he asked.

Rāmeśvara told Prabhupāda some of his techniques for selling a book.

After a few moments Prabhupāda said, "Our men need to study our books also."

On the morning Tripurāri accompanied Prabhupāda on his walk, Prabhupāda said little as they walked up and down the beach. Only when they were walking back toward the car did one of the devotees mention, "Prabhupāda, Tripurāri is here."

Prabhupāda turned and smiled. "Ah. How is the book distribution going?" he asked.

This was Tripurāri's first time to speak directly with his spiritual master, and he wanted to say many things at once. In nervous enthusiasm he began blurting out his realizations. Prabhupāda interrupted, "This is the best service for humanity." And he quoted from the Bhagavad-gītā, "There will never be a devotee more dear to Me than he who preaches this message."

With the exception of Rāmeśvara's and Tripurāri's brief encounters with Prabhupāda, none of the book distributors in Los Angeles had any personal exchanges or meetings with their spiritual master. But the closeness of their relationship with him was not dependent on physical proximity.

Tripurāri: My association with Śrīla Prabhupāda was always more or less in separation and in the field. While many of the older devotees were trained personally by Prabhupāda, I never got that training. I was trained by Śrīla Prabhupāda more from within my own heart. I think that's the case with all of our book distributors. They have a very intimate sense of feeling for Prabhupāda, but they never had much personal contact. Their intimacy and real sense of knowing Prabhupāda very closely was because of that service which Prabhupāda said was his life and soul—seeing that the books went out.

Śrīla Prabhupāda liked to sit in his garden, with its roses, jasmine, azaleas, honeysuckle, mint, silver lace vine, marigolds, and banana trees, and he liked the sound of the fountain. The small

compound, with its lawn, flowers, bushes, and seat for Śrīla Prabhupāda, was surrounded by high cinder-block walls. When Prabhupāda received special guests, the devotees would bring chairs for them, but Prabhupāda's disciples would always sit on thin mats on the lawn and look up at Śrīla Prabhupāda on his elevated seat. The neighborhood was quieter and more peaceful in the evening, and Prabhupāda could hear the kīrtana in the temple and the cars passing along Venice Boulevard. Men's shouts from the nearby karate school were a disturbance Prabhupāda had come to tolerate.

For an hour or more Prabhupāda would sit, listening to a reading from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, while around him on the grass, sharing the transcendental moment, sat his disciples. Prabhupāda was fully satisfied to hear Kṛṣṇa līlā, and he would sit erect, head held high, in a meditative mood. It was only an informal group, but his presence made the occasion very special, momentous. From time to time he would interrupt the reader to comment. Night would fall, and he would end the reading and leave the garden, walking on the gravel path past the main temple building and up to his second floor suite.

Śrīla Prabhupāda so much liked his Los Angeles garden that he decided he wanted one like it at his Māyāpur headquarters.

With regard to the Māyāpur house, I may suggest you make one roof garden. On the top of the house you can put soil of six inches and then plant so many tulasi plants and nice bushes. I like the garden very much. Just like here in Los Angeles temple they have made one very nice garden for me and I sit there every evening. So you please also make a first-class Māyāpur garden.

At about ten in the evening Śrīla Prabhupāda would usually go into his bedroom and lie down. His servant, Śrutakīrti, would massage his legs, and Prabhupāda would then close his eyes. Meanwhile, Rāmeśvara would be waiting at the bottom of the stairs, hoping that the secretary or servant would come down with a message from Prabhupāda.

Rāmeśvara: I was too afraid to go into Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, so I would be waiting at the bottom of the stairs, just hanging there, just waiting for one word. Śrīla Prabhupāda would often say something, and it would be passed to me. Then every morning the saṅkīrtana devotees would just surround me and ask, "What did he say?" They would be begging for some nectar. It was an intense experience. We felt that we were all having a special direct connection with Prabhupāda.

While waiting outside Prabhupāda's door, I would be in transcendental bliss just thinking how we were distributing books as an offering of pure love for our spiritual master. This was the first time that devotees were going to the airports. No one else in the movement was going to an airport except the devotees in Los Angeles, so it was something very special. No one was doing big books in the quantity that we were.

At one point, when Śrīla Prabhupāda saw one of my daily saṅkīrtana reports, he commented, "Who is Rāmeśvara?"

Day after day, Śrīla Prabhupāda was seeing these ecstatic reports, sprinkled with nectarean quotes from his Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā chapter that had just been published. He realized that these disciples were in ecstasy, and so he asked, "Who are they?" He could see we loved saṅkīrtana. It

was not an artificial burden or that we were struggling. He could see that there didn't seem to be any struggle. It was like fun, bliss, ecstasy. And the whole philosophy was there. We were completely tuning in to the Caitanya-caritāmṛta philosophy that Lord Caitanya descends with His confidential associates to spread love of God but doesn't discriminate who is a fit candidate and who is not. These were the verses we were putting into the daily letter. This was our mood, and Prabhupāda loved it.

From Śrutakīrti's point of view, the evening massage was a very special time, because Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed free of the pressure of the day's management. Śrutakīrti would bring several night-blooming jasmine flowers from the garden, and Prabhupāda would place the fragrant blossoms near his nose during the massage. He would be even quieter and more relaxed than during the Kṛṣṇa book reading. There was no business to attend to; he had done a hard day's work. Although he would be rising after only three hours' rest, he now lay back, enwrapped in thought or chanting softly.

Some evenings Śrīla Prabhupāda would delay the massage and slowly walk back and forth in his bedroom, chanting on his beads, or he would sit on his bed and chant. But on most nights he would lie on his back, while Śrutakīrti massaged his legs. If he conversed with his servant at all, it wouldn't be about ISKCON management. He might look at a picture on the wall and say, "How beautiful Kṛṣṇa is! How could they not be attracted to Kṛṣṇa?" Or sometimes he would talk about his childhood and other informal topics. But even at this relaxed time, he relished hearing the saṅkīrtana results, and so he would sometimes read Rāmeśvara's daily report or simply say something about preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One night, after reading Rāmeśvara's ecstatic daily saṅkīrtana report, Prabhupāda felt moved to write a message on the back of the report. Dating the paper April 20, 1973, he wrote,

My dear boys and girls, you are working so hard for broadcasting the glories of Lord Krishna's lotus feet and thus my Guru Maharaj will be so pleased upon you. Certainly my Guru Maharaj will bestow His blessings thousand times more than me and that is my satisfaction. All Glories to the assembled devotees.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

N.B. Everyone should go with the Sankirtan Party as soon as possible.

Rāmeśvara may have been shy while quietly waiting at the bottom of the stairs for the slightest recognition from Śrīla Prabhupāda, but when he received the prize jewel of this handwritten note, he ran off, shouting to share the good fortune with any devotee who was still awake.

Tripurāri: Every morning after maṅgala-ārati there was always a little group clustered around the door of the temple, because you weren't supposed to talk in the temple while chanting japa early in the morning. So Rāmeśvara was standing at the doorway chanting, and he called us over, until a little cluster of devotees were there at the doorway. He showed us Prabhupāda's note. Some of the other devotees got frustrated, seeing that we were talking during the japa period. They felt we were a distraction or that we weren't absorbed in our service or in japa. But actually we were really

intensely absorbed in thinking of saṅkīrtana, and when we returned to our japa, we began chanting with the desire to be able to go out and please Prabhupāda.

In a few days Prabhupāda's words—"Everyone should go with the Sankirtan Party as soon as possible"—reached the other temples. And although Śrīla Prabhupāda soon left Los Angeles, returning to India, his message stayed and deepened the devotees' convictions.

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In the summer of 1973 the devotees found that at concerts they could distribute hundreds of Kṛṣṇa books in a few hours. The Kṛṣṇa book, available now as a paperback trilogy with a foreword by George Harrison, was especially attractive to young people. In July, Rāmeśvara wrote to Prabhupāda in London, telling him that the Los Angeles temple was distributing two thousand Kṛṣṇa books a week and that at one concert devotees had distributed six hundred books in two hours.

The devotees in Los Angeles decided that Tripurāri and a few other leading saṅkīrtana men should travel from temple to temple and share their experience. Rāmeśvara wrote to Prabhupāda, "This is the mercy of Sri Sri Rukmini-Dvarakadhisa [the Deities of the L.A. temple] that we can send out so many devotees to other centers. It is the real opulence of New Dvārakā." Śrīla Prabhupāda replied on August 3.

There is no doubt about it, to distribute books is our most important activity. The temple is a place not for eating and sleeping, but as a base from which we send out our soldiers to fight with maya. Fight with maya means to drop thousands and millions of books into the laps of the conditioned souls. Just like during the war time the Bombs are raining from the sky like anything...

I like also your program of sending out your best men to teach the others. That is the actual progress of Krishna Consciousness, to train others. Continue this program so that in the future every devotee in our movement will know the art of distributing books. This is approved by me.

A letter from a woman who had recently received some of Prabhupāda's books appeared in the July BBT newsletter. The letter had been written on TWA in-flight stationery.

In the S.F. airport before I departed for London, the Kṛṣṇa book was given to me by one of your followers... I never felt so happy & privileged, or honored would be a better phrase...

I am sick of this material rat race, I want a higher life without material riches and games.

On her way back from London she had purchased another book, Rāja-vidyā, in the Chicago airport and now asked for more help. "It is beautiful," she concluded.

As Tripurāri traveled and taught his method of saṅkīrtana, more devotees followed his example and began wearing a wig and conventional dress while selling books. This way of dressing made approaching people much easier and increased the potential for distributing books. Some devotees, however, disapproved.

One day in September 1973, during Śrīla Prabhupāda's morning walk on Juhu Beach in Bombay, a few of his sannyāsī disciples brought the matter before him. Prabhupāda referred to the many gentlemen strolling along Juhu Beach who would always offer respects to the devotees by folding their hands and saying, "Hare Kṛṣṇa." This was the sign of a real Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Prabhupāda said: anyone who sees him immediately thinks of Kṛṣṇa. The devotees, therefore, should prominently display such Vaiṣṇava markings as tilaka, śikhā, and neck beads, so that people could know, "Here are Hare Kṛṣṇa people."

One sannyāsī remarked that in America devotees were now wearing wigs and dressing like hippies to distribute books. He did not let his own men do this because he felt it self-defeating if people didn't even know they were speaking to a devotee. If someone wanted to distribute books, he concluded, Kṛṣṇa would help that devotee find a place where he could do so without having to disguise himself.

Śrīla Prabhupāda turned to the others, asking their opinions. One devotee suggested that the reason the devotees in America wore "disguises" was because otherwise they would not be permitted to distribute books in certain places. Prabhupāda heard the opinions and then gave his decision: these disguises should be stopped immediately. "We shall not in any way sacrifice our standards," he said. "We must maintain our principles strictly. This dressing with long hair and karmī clothes is the tendency to once again become hippies. Because you were hippies, that tendency is still there. So this should be stopped."

Walking back toward the temple, Prabhupāda saw a poor man evacuating by the roadside in public view. "He is not changing his standard, despite public opinion," Prabhupāda said. "Can we not maintain our standards as strictly as they are maintaining theirs?"

A letter was drafted and signed by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, Prabhupāda's secretary, and Prabhupāda signed also, on a line marked "approved." The letter stated that all saṅkīrtana devotees should always wear tilaka, dhotīs, neck beads, and śikhā, and should depend on Kṛṣṇa rather than disguises to help distribute books. At the bottom of the letter, however, was a P.S.—"Śrīla Prabhupāda, upon checking the above, added, 'If they like, they may wear coat and pants... But tilak, sikha, beads—these things should be there.' " Previously Śrīla Prabhupāda had addressed this subject in various letters. To Jagadīśa in Canada Prabhupāda had replied that there was no objection to wearing Western clothes, including a wig or hat. "We have to take whatever is favorable position for executing Kṛṣṇa consciousness," Prabhupāda had written. "Sometimes we may adopt such means in order to help distribute books." But in February 1973 he had written to Rūpānuga that he did not want devotees dressing as hippies.

...This should be stopped. We should not give anyone cause to call us hippies, but the devotees may dress up in respectable clothes like ladies and gentlemen in order to distribute my literatures under special circumstances...

Wherever there are individuals there are bound to be differences of opinion.

Śrīla Prabhupāda preferred to be spared such detailed management. His G.B.C. men should consult among themselves and then present their conclusions to him for a final decision. "In this way," Prabhupāda had written, "I will be free to concentrate on my translation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam."

The letter from India reached Karandhara in Los Angeles, but before announcing that all saṅkīrtana in Western clothes must be stopped, he wanted Prabhupāda to hear his side of the story. He gave an elaborate report on the benefits of devotees' wearing ordinary Western dress while selling books. The main thing Prabhupāda seemed to be objecting to, he concluded, was a disreputable appearance—devotees looking like hippies. He now informed Prabhupāda that the distributors were actually clean, well groomed, and presentable. If the book distributors were restricted to appearing in public with shaved head and dhotī, he said, then the distribution would decline by about two thirds. "If extremes and misapplications have occurred," he wrote, "they should be worked out rather than giving up the whole program."

This time Śrīla Prabhupāda replied in favor of Western dress.

Yes, you can go on with your book distribution as you were doing before, there is not any harm. I thought that our men were becoming like hippies, but now I understand from you that this is not the case. So I have no objection. Our main business is to distribute books, and from the reports I am receiving from all over the world, the progress is very encouraging.

A disagreement arose about the distributors' techniques. A few people had written the ISKCON secretary complaining that they had been misled or pressured into buying a book, a complaint to which devotees responded variously.

The book distributors were protective of Prabhupāda's order that as many books as possible be distributed. Just because a few people had complained, they argued, was no reason to cool down book distribution. They quoted Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements that opposition to saṅkīrtana indicates its purity and genuineness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had explained this point in his books in discussing the historical incident of Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana parties' being stopped by the Muslim government. Prabhupāda had written,

We must remember that such incidents took place in the past, five hundred years ago, and the fact that they are still going on indicates that our saṅkīrtana movement is really authorized, for if saṅkīrtana were an insignificant material affair, demons would not object to it.

People in America had also objected to public chanting, to the devotees' dress, to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy, to the food. Someone would always oppose. The main thing, the book distributors said, was to save the conditioned souls, who were heading for a hellish next life. If a person got a book and read just one page, his life could be changed.

Other devotees, however, including temple presidents, were disturbed by the complaints. Someone recalled that Prabhupāda had already addressed this point in 1970.

Do all activities with great enthusiasm. All our activities must be open so that no one may criticize our mission, so all dealing must be to the standard of Vaishnavism. As everything is undertaken forthrightly in Krishna Consciousness, in a Krishna Conscious way, then Lord Krishna will be pleased to provide all facilities for aiding such sincere service.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted the book distributors to execute his order, but he was not giving them a license to do anything and everything and claim it was for Kṛṣṇa. Preaching required expertise, not only in getting people to take a book but in giving them the right impression.

The book distributors maintained that they were doing the best they could but that they would try to improve. If other devotees thought they could do better, then they should demonstrate how to distribute books without disturbing anyone. Distributing books all day, day after day, was hard. People were already agitated by their minds and senses and harassed by their occupations, governments, and personal relationships. No wonder even an innocent devotee sometimes disturbed them.

The tactics in question were mostly the book distributors' lines. The distributors would say that they were students, that they were helping get young people off drugs, or that the books were about how to solve modern day crises. None of these things were untrue, but the emphasis was sometimes excessive.

A mature devotee could speak more directly. Tripurāri would tell how the books described an ancient civilization in which people knew how life should be lived. He would present himself as a representative of an organization that had communities all over the world where people could benefit from the example of an alternative life-style. Tripurāri and others were able to be both personal and, in a casual way, philosophical, as they spoke about spiritual life. They made quick friends with strangers and convinced them to take books. But more and more devotees were taking up book distribution and many were inexperienced.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's philosophy was clear, but different interpretations persisted. Without referring to specific techniques, Prabhupāda simply stressed the purity of book distribution and encouraged the book distributors to continue without interruption; the main thing was to distribute books.

Devotees continued to press Śrīla Prabhupāda for further clarification. The book distributors were concerned that the urgency of book distribution not be minimized, whereas other responsible ISKCON leaders were concerned that loose practices might hamper the Society's progress. Prabhupāda replied to questions by Bali-mardana of New York with a letter that became particularly influential.

The real preaching is selling books. You should know the tactic how to sell without irritating. What your lecture will do for three minutes, but if he reads one page his life may be turned. We don't want to irritate anyone, however. If he goes away by your aggressive tactics, then you are nonsense and it is your failure. Neither you could sell a book, neither he would remain. But if he buys a book, that is the real successful preaching.

Prabhupāda's position was clear: the books should be sold, but expertly. And lest there be any doubt, Prabhupāda reiterated that the book distribution was the best preaching. "The success of your preaching will be substantiated by how many books are sold." Prabhupāda also wrote, "The art is to sell many, many books and not to irritate the public."

As books continued to go out by the millions, many people expressed their thanks on receiving a book. Only occasionally would someone complain. But within ISKCON, the dialogue regarding book distribution techniques continued. When Śrī Govinda, the president of ISKCON Chicago, wrote Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda encouraged him in his attempt to reform the devotees engaged in excessive practices.

So it is not very much advisable to make lies just to sell books. If we simply stick to describing how wonderful is Krishna, that will not be a lie! But other things, lies, they will not help us to train ourselves in truthfulness. Lie to some, not to others, that is not a good philosophy. Rather the brahmins are always truthful, even to their enemies. There is sufficient merit in our books that if you simply describe them sincerely to anyone, they will buy. That art you must develop, not art of lying. Convince them to give by your preaching the Absolute Truth, not by tricking. That is the more mature stage of development of Krishna Consciousness.

* * *

November 1973

Scores of men and women were going out every day to distribute books. One November day the devotees of the New York City temple broke the ISKCON world record by distributing 13,200 pieces of literature. On the same day they also distributed 15,000 pieces of prasādam. The ISKCON total for 1973 was 4,169,000 books sold. When Śrīla Prabhupāda received these figures, he replied to Rāmeśvara,

I have faith in your words that next year the figures will be far beyond what they were last year. It is the nature of the spiritual energy, it is always increasing if we just apply our energy.

Early in January 1974, Śrīla Prabhupāda again returned to Los Angeles. One morning he gave a Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam lecture stressing book distribution. "There is no literature throughout the universe like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam," he said. "There is no comparison or competition. Every word is for the good of the human society. Each and every word. Therefore we stress so much in the book distribution. Somehow or other, if the book goes in one's hand, he'll be benefited. At least he'll see, 'I have taken so much price—let me see what is there.' If he reads one śloka, his life will become successful. If he reads one śloka, one word! This is such a nice thing. Therefore, we are stressing so much, please distribute books, distribute books, distribute books."

* * *

The year 1974 began with what appeared to be a serious setback. The Supreme Court ruled against Vietnamese war protestors' distributing political leaflets in private malls. Citizens of nonprofit

groups—religious included—could solicit on private property only with permission from the proprietor. The malls that the book distributors had frequented were suddenly off limits.

The same constitution that barred the devotees from private property, however, gave them access to public property, and when ISKCON devotees filed a lawsuit against the city-owned Las Vegas airport, they won an immediate injunction on the basis that the airport was denying them their right to free speech. This ruling promised to open a new era in book distribution, with possibilities of legalizing saṅkīrtana in all major airports.

Devotees saw this as proof that Kṛṣṇa was working through Prabhupāda to increase book distribution. No previous spiritual master had ever distributed Vedic literature on so great a scale. This was another sign that Śrīla Prabhupāda was Kṛṣṇa's empowered representative. And by the devotees' efforts to follow Prabhupāda's order, Kṛṣṇa was empowering them also. But only if they were willing to go through the trials of surrender and renunciation.

Praghoṣa: I went out one day to the airport, and I walked up to one black man and said, "Excuse me, sir." And BAM! He punched me right in the face and knocked me down. At that moment so many thoughts went through my mind. I could just hear Tripurāri's words ringing in my ears from the class that morning: "We must be determined..." So I just said to myself, "Well, I'll just stand right back up and keep trying." I stood up, and I got the inspiration to just turn around and try to hand the next person one of Prabhupāda's books.

Another time a husband and wife approached me, but the husband didn't want anything to do with me. When the woman saw that the book was spiritual, she stopped and said, "What's this book about?" I said very bluntly, "This book explains birth and death and what's beyond." She said, "Oh." Then she turned to her husband and said, "Please buy it." But he said, "I don't want it. Come on, let's go." She said, "Please!" But her husband said, "You buy it." And he walked off.

So she stayed with me and said, "Could you tell me a little more about this?" I started to explain the book, and then I said, "Where are you coming from?" She said, "I'm coming from Rochester." Then she revealed to me that she was coming from the Mayo Clinic and that she had terminal cancer and was going to die. She said, "I desperately want to read this book." She gave me ten dollars and said, "Thank you very much." Then she took the book and ran off.

A little later she came back and found me and shook my hand and thanked me. These kind of experiences that devotees would have day in and day out gave us the feeling of being like emissaries or representatives of something very special. By this we became more attached to Śrīla Prabhupāda and to executing his work. We would see these miracles take place.

Keśava Bhāratī: I used to distribute books in the San Francisco airport. I thought that this airport was particularly difficult and that if I could be in L.A. I could probably distribute as many books as Tripurāri. I was a little proud. Then I got the chance to distribute with him.

I am very outgoing and gregarious, so I don't have any problem stopping people or anything like that. But half an hour and then an hour went by, and Tripurāri had distributed five and then ten books. But I couldn't get anybody to stop and shake my hand even. It was incredible! But I knew it

was because I was too proud. Another hour went by, and still no one would stop and shake my hand. I was bewildered, because I wanted to pass out Prabhupāda's books. Finally I just sat down out of frustration. I was nearly crying.

Tripurāri came up and preached to me. He told me I should pray to Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda in times like this and not to worry about it, that this happens. So I got it together, and then about ten to fifteen people in a row came and talked with me, and some of them took books. So when we discussed it afterward, we could understand that we were just instruments in Lord Caitanya's hands. This is how we developed the *saṅkīrtana* philosophy. Through the book distribution we came to realize who Prabhupāda was and to appreciate him more.

Lavaṅga-latikā: All day I would stand at the top of the stairs, and thousands and thousands of people would come by. And we would distribute hundreds and hundreds of books. We used to take lines from Prabhupāda's books. Tripurāri used to talk about the swans' taking milk from water. So we used to use that a lot in approaching someone. We'd say how these great sages used to know how to separate milk from water, separate the essence. He also said the pictures were windows to the spiritual world. We'd say, "This book is like the brilliant sun that will drive away the darkness of ignorance in this age of Kali."

I found the best way to distribute the books was to use Prabhupāda's own words. Prabhupāda said if we read one line to someone, that person can make one hundred times spiritual advancement. One time a devotee complained to Prabhupāda that people were throwing some of the books away. But then we could understand that Prabhupāda wanted them distributed on a large scale. Not that you kept the book for a special person you thought might be intelligent enough to read it. Because Prabhupāda said that if they read only one line they would be very much affected. So we could understand that Prabhupāda wanted mass distribution, not that we just keep them for the special, right person.

Sura: Vaiṣeṣika was selling books in the airport with me. He would walk up to people and say, "Well, how are you doing, sir? All glories to the śrī-kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana* movement, the prime benediction for humanity at large, which cleanses the heart." He was repeating the Śikṣāṣṭakam prayers of Lord Caitanya right out of the book, and yet he was selling books. The books had pictures of Kṛṣṇa and devotional scenes on the cover, and sometimes some devotees couldn't understand how people could relate to these books. But Prabhupāda wanted them distributed. And he was saying that we should preach on the merit of the book. When a devotee asked Prabhupāda what we should say to distribute the books, Prabhupāda replied *kṛṣṇe sva-dhāmopagate*, which is the verse that says the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is as brilliant as the sun and it has arisen just to give people religion in this age of darkness. So we were also repeating that verse and distributing books on faith.

We would go out and see the people actually becoming struck by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They would see that the devotees were very sincere and serious, and they would become impressed. Daily on *saṅkīrtana* we would see people appreciating Prabhupāda's books. There was also harassment, but Prabhupāda had talked about it, that there was always difficulty. So everything was there from Prabhupāda to confirm whatever realizations we had. Śrīla Prabhupāda said a book salesman would

sometimes have difficulty because he'll be sometimes accepted and sometimes rejected. But he tolerates.

In the airport we met professors, lawyers, all kinds of people who would stop and talk. They would challenge, and we would constantly have to defend Prabhupāda's books and his movement and speak up on behalf of Prabhupāda, more so than when we were just kids out on the parking lots talking to women and begging fifty cents for a pack of incense. We were presenting Prabhupāda's books to the scholars, coming into contact with Māyāvādīs, scientists, businessmen, people who were very sharp, in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and San Diego. People there were very sharp and hard. And just by having to spiritually combat them and defend the movement, we became more mature in our understanding of Prabhupāda's books and how to present them in such a way that we could convince even people who didn't want to be convinced. We had to study Prabhupāda's books.

In 1974 several new parties formed just for disTributing books. Tripurāri had been traveling as an emissary from Los Angeles, but now, with Śrīla Prabhupāda's permission, he formed a Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT) saṅkīrtana party of some leading book distributors. The BBT distributors stationed themselves in various airports around the country, creating a significant increase in book distribution.

"Your entire program is approved by me," Prabhupāda wrote to Tripurāri. When Tripurāri asked if he could take sannyāsa, Prabhupāda replied that he was already doing more than any sannyāsī. In one letter Prabhupāda called him "the incarnation of book distribution."

Book distribution took another great stride forward when Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, Śrīla Prabhupāda's zonal secretary in India for four years, returned to the U.S. Joining with his friend Viṣṇujana Swami, he helped form the Rādhā-Dāmodara saṅkīrtana party, traveling in a bus with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities to distribute books and hold festivals all over the U.S.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami: When we first began the Rādhā-Dāmodara party our idea was to make as many devotees as possible by holding festivals at which we chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa and distributed prasādam. After Kṛṣṇa sent so many nice young men it was difficult to keep them always engaged. Then suddenly a letter arrived from Śrīla Prabhupāda in which he said that the kīrtana of book distribution was better than the kīrtana of public chanting. This transcendental instruction changed the course of our Rādhā-Dāmodara party. From then on I concentrated more and more on book distribution, and this gave Prabhupāda greater and greater pleasure. I had been in India for four years, but our main program had been enrolling life members. But now that I was in America Śrīla Prabhupāda was reminding me that preaching meant to distribute his books. So I became inspired that our party should distribute so many books that it equal all of the other book distribution of the rest of ISKCON worldwide. Day and night I was thinking of how to get out more and more books and thus overflow America with transcendental literature. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote me that this was his real ambition, to turn all of America into Vaiṣṇavas.

Until we formed our Rādhā-Dāmodara party, the method of distributing books had been that an individual would be given either a large, medium, or small book, according to the size of the donation. But Prabhupāda told me that of all types of book distribution, to distribute his large

books was most important. So I was always considering how to increase the number of large books. The problem was that people were willing to give small donations, but rarely would they give us large enough contributions to award giving them a large book. Then Kṛṣṇa gave me the idea that by adding together a few small donations from a number of persons, at least one of them could be given a large book, while the others could be given a Back to Godhead magazine or a small book. By this method we were able to increase the distribution of big books tremendously. Prabhupāda fully approved of this idea. As long as the Book Fund received payment for the books, Śrīla Prabhupāda allowed us to pass them out as quickly as we could, irrespective of the size of donation. Thus our Rādhā-Dāmodara party was able to distribute as many as fifty thousand big books in a single month.

Śrīla Prabhupāda showed special interest in the Rādhā-Dāmodara party and approved loans from the BBT for the purchase of more buses, thus creating a saṅkīrtana army traveling in renovated Greyhound buses. By the end of 1974 the Rādhā-Dāmodara party had three buses, vans, and numerous men. Prabhupāda called the buses "moving temples," and he urged the Rādhā-Dāmodara devotees to continue their program, with certainty that they were pleasing Lord Caitanya. "I am glad that you have understood the importance of my books," Prabhupāda wrote, "therefore I am stressing it so much. Let everyone take these books."

Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged the Rādhā-Dāmodara party to expand to hundreds of buses and thus fulfill the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to every town and village. When a tight transcendental competition arose between the Los Angeles temple, Tripurāri's BBT party, and the Rādhā-Dāmodara party, Prabhupāda watched and approved it with pleasure.

Another party forming in 1974 was the BBT library party. It began with Hṛdayānanda Goswami's sending some brahmacārīs from his traveling party to visit prestigious universities in New England. The men attempted to sell entire sets of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books to the professors, and even in their first attempts they met with great success.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had long cherished this idea, and even before coming to America he had gone to libraries in India with copies of his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam First Canto. By his efforts in New Delhi, the United States Library of Congress had obtained copies of those early volumes. Now his desire to see his books placed in all the U.S. libraries and universities was becoming a reality. Within a few months professors began writing favorable reviews, and some even ordered Prabhupāda's books for their college courses. "I very much like this program of the standing orders," Prabhupāda wrote. "Try to increase it up to fifty thousand such orders from the libraries."

Another party that formed in 1974 was Nāma-haṭṭa, a group of brahmacārīs led by two sannyāsīs. The Nāma-haṭṭa party would travel and distribute books, donating their profits toward Śrīla Prabhupāda's projects in Bombay, Māyāpur, and Vṛndāvana.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda became ill for several weeks in September of 1974, the book distribution reports were his best medicine. "Whenever I get report of my books selling," he wrote to the library party, "I feel strength. Even now in this weakened condition I have got strength from your report." And during the same illness he wrote to Rāmeśvara,

Regarding book sales figures, please endeavor in this way. This is the only solace of my life. When I hear that my books are selling so nicely, I become energetic like a young man.

Śrīla Prabhupāda recovered his health, and by the end of 1974 his BBT was also in extraordinary health, with the temples again competing in a furious Christmas marathon. In America, the BBT reported to Prabhupāda that approximately 387,000 hardbound books had been sold during the year, a 67% increase over the previous year. And almost 4,000,000 Back to Godheads had been sold, an 89% increase. The American BBT sold the individual temples a total of 6,668,000 pieces of literature, a 60% increase.

Such news made Śrīla Prabhupāda “become energetic like a young man,” and Prabhupāda and his book distribution movement headed into 1975 with all signs of increasing—doubling and tripling—the already astounding figures of 1974.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda had created his Bhaktivedanta Book Trust in 1972 as an independent entity to insure that his books could continue being produced and distributed. The BBT would operate exclusively for the benefit of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and yet it would exist independently.

The trust document stated that the trustees should divide the money from the sale of the books to ISKCON temples into two funds: one for printing books and one for purchasing ISKCON properties and building temples. Prabhupāda believed that if this fifty-fifty formula were followed, Kṛṣṇa would assure the success of ISKCON. Repeatedly he would refer to this formula in conversations and letters, even in his purports on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave his BBT trustees authority to make printing plans, and the trustees would then consult him for approval. He would set the standards and guidelines for his BBT trustees to follow. Only after consulting him could they institute changes.

And to changes Prabhupāda was particularly averse. He would choose the book size, determine the artwork, and make suggestions about the size of a particular printing, about shipping policies, about sales to temples—about almost every aspect of the BBT's publishing activities. Even when certain temples did not remit their payments to the BBT, Prabhupāda would become involved.

It is not good if such big temples who are setting the example for the whole Society do not pay their bills. This is most irregular. I am trying to retire from the administrative affairs, but if the presidents and G.B.C. men make such disturbances, then how can I be peaceful? Things should be maintained automatically, then it will be peaceful for me.

He was a strict manager. “According to Vedic instruction,” he said, “fire, debt, and disease should never be neglected. They must be extinguished by all means.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda saw book distribution as (among other things) the basis for an economically sound ISKCON. Other businesses could also operate, but book-selling was the best, for it combined preaching with a good source of income. As he wrote to one of his temple presidents,

I am very encouraged by the report of how nicely our books are being distributed. This is our main business all over the world. If you give full attention to this, there will never be any shortage of funds.

And on another occasion,

Regarding the society's leaders emphasizing business, you should understand what is the meaning of business. Business means to help the preaching. Preaching needs financial help, otherwise, we have no need for business. So far as I understand, our book business is sufficient to support our movement.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also oversaw all BBT loans to temples; any G.B.C. secretary or temple president requesting a loan would have to approach him. In 1973 and 1974 he granted sizable loans for building, purchasing, or improving temples in Dallas, Hawaii, Sydney, Chicago, and Vancouver. He also granted a loan to the Rādhā-Dāmodara party for buying "traveling temples," or buses, and one to South America for printing books. Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja automatically received a fifty-thousand-dollar loan each year for New Vrindaban. But Prabhupāda would deny money requests for projects he considered inconsistent with the purposes of the BBT. On November 6 he wrote to Rāmeśvara,

No, we cannot loan BBT money for any other purposes than what is mentioned in the BBT Agreement. These other loans for cows, equipment, and restaurants must all be re-paid, and no other loans other than for publishing and temple construction can be granted.

Beginning in 1974, Śrīla Prabhupāda utilized the BBT profits for constructing his main temples in India—Vṛndāvana, Māyāpur, and especially Bombay. Rāmeśvara informed the devotees of this special function of the BBT.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is personally overseeing all the Indian programs and spending... If one rupee is misspent Śrīla Prabhupāda becomes disturbed and chastises the devotees (mercifully)—"...this money is earned by the sweat of many devotees, so why you are not careful?" Śrīla Prabhupāda wants to see our Vrindavana temple, SRI SRI KRISHNA-BALARAM Mandir completed by Janmastami. Prabhupāda wants to establish Sri Mayapur Temple as well... One interesting note in this connection is that in India, I've been told that 10 paise purchases 1 brick! 10 paise means US \$0.01—just think every penny you collect may buy one brick in India. EVERY PENNY COUNTS TOWARDS THESE TRANSCENDENTAL GOALS!

"These places in India," Prabhupāda wrote, "are spiritually potent. By establishing temples in Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana we assure that the purity of our movement will be kept intact."

In October of 1974 Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Hamsadūta, his G.B.C. secretary for Germany, "Whenever there is any publication in any language, it enlivens me one hundred times." Although

Śrīla Prabhupāda's order from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was to preach and publish in the English language, he had expanded that order to include all the languages and countries of the world. "My first concern is that my books shall be published and distributed profusely all over the world," Śrīla Prabhupāda had written to one of the first devotees in Europe in 1972. Prabhupāda wrote always in English, but ever since 1968, when ISKCON had first begun spreading to other countries, he had been talking of printing his books in foreign languages.

When in 1972 a German edition of Bhagavad-gītā had been printed, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written Hamsadūta, "You have done the right thing by printing Bhagavad-gītā in German language, and I very much appreciate that you have done this great service." By 1973, saṅkīrtana parties had been traveling throughout Germany, distributing several hundred copies of Bhagavad-gītā a week. Hamsadūta had promised that he would translate one book a month into German, and when in the fall of 1974 Prabhupāda heard of six recently printed German translations, he replied, "This is very happy news for me. Thank you. Overflood Europe with German books."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that whenever he published a book he felt that he had conquered an empire. His books were the basis of the spiritual revolution that would eventually change humanity and save it from the pernicious effects of the age of Kali.

"Produce voluminously Spanish language literature," Śrīla Prabhupāda requested. When Hṛdayānanda Goswami had become the zonal leader for South America, Śrīla Prabhupāda had instructed him to emphasize printing and distributing books above opening temples. "I also was printing even before I had big temples in the U.S.," Prabhupāda had written. "So you may follow the footsteps of the previous ācāryas."

Hṛdayānanda Goswami had organized a Spanish BBT in Mexico and had made book distribution his priority. Early in 1974, when the Spanish BBT was ready to print translations of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's first volume, Bhagavad-gītā, and Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Prabhupāda wrote,

By printing these books of our Kṛṣṇa Conscious philosophy in so many different languages we can actually inject our movement into the masses of persons all over the world, especially there in the western countries and we can literally turn whole nations into Kṛṣṇa conscious nations.

When one hundred thousand copies of a Spanish Back to Godhead were printed, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "Now give them to everyone." Spanish book distribution became the second largest in the world, next to American.

Bhagavān, Śrīla Prabhupāda's representative in southern Europe, had been printing in French and Italian, and as early as December 1972 he had printed Prabhupāda's Easy Journey to Other Planets in French. By the beginning of 1974, three parties in France were distributing daily one thousand books, including a French Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. Already Bhagavān had printed the first Italian Back to Godhead, and a French Śrī Īsopaniṣad was forthcoming.

Wherever devotees went, they knew their program was to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, follow the regulative principles, and arrange for printing and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. When the first

devotees had reached South Africa, they had proceeded just according to Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire, and he had replied to them, "Your report is very encouraging to me, that you distributed 110 Gītās in two days in Capetown."

Śrīla Prabhupāda often thought of having his books printed in Russian, and he wrote to the minister of education and culture in the U.S.S.R., suggesting they publish "a translation of the ancient classical Vedic literature, namely, Bhagavad-gītā" as already published by "the famous London publishing house of M.S.S. Macmillan Company." He also talked with his disciples about printing Russian translations in America.

Whenever Śrīla Prabhupāda met an interested person proficient in any foreign language, he would request that person to translate his books. In 1972 he had written,

I am also very encouraged to hear that Japanese language translations of some of my books will be brought out soon, because without books and magazines, what authority or what basis have we got for preaching?

Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written to an American devotee in Indonesia,

I am especially happy to hear that you have got a Chinese boy there who is doing some translating work. Yes, the Chinese-speaking portion of the world is very huge and it requires to infiltrate gradually, especially by distributing our literatures widely in Chinese languages. So his service is the greatest to Kṛṣṇa.

Later, when Prabhupāda heard that the Chinese boy, Yaśomatī-suta, had finished translating three chapters of Bhagavad-gītā into Chinese, he wrote that they should immediately print those three chapters as a small book.

ISKCON Australia rose to prominence in the book distribution competition and, by 1974, was competing with Los Angeles ISKCON and the Rādhā Dāmodara party for world leadership. By the fall of 1974 about a dozen top Australian and New Zealand distributors were selling daily more than twenty big books each. The centers in Australia, like those in America, more than doubled their book distribution between 1973 and 1974.

When book distribution had been just beginning in America in 1970, no books had been available in England. But within a year, Kṛṣṇa book distribution had begun there, and Śrīla Prabhupāda had written, "All of my disciples in London center are very intelligent, and they should unite around this single task of selling Krishna book widely throughout Britain." By 1974 the devotees in Britain were valiantly distributing books. During one busy six-day period, they distributed six hundred volumes of Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, four hundred of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and one thousand Back to Godhead magazines.

India was special. There Śrīla Prabhupāda had introduced book distribution through the ISKCON life membership program. Wealthy Indians were more inclined to accept the books as part of an ISKCON membership package, which included such benefits as free accommodations in ISKCON

temples throughout the world. But in India, as elsewhere, Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted his books distributed to colleges, to libraries, to prominent citizens, and to the masses.

By the end of 1974 Prabhupāda's disciples were ready to print Hindi and Bengali editions of *Back to Godhead*. When Śrīla Prabhupāda heard that Western devotees in India were complaining of insufficient engagement, he replied, "I am pleased you are selling many Krishna Books daily. All our men should go out with books. There is sufficient engagement." To his G.B.C. secretary in India he wrote, "Engage all of them in book distribution specifically, and take with you some sankirtan party."

"Without books we will make no progress in India," Śrīla Prabhupāda had written to Tejās, his temple president in Delhi. Prabhupāda had also trained his leaders in India in the strict policy of "fifty-fifty." "Proceeds from life membership or any other collections should go fifty percent to the BBT and fifty percent for construction and other projects." On his order the American BBT had been making donations of books to India and by 1974 had donated three hundred thousand dollars' worth of literature. Although America was the leading pioneer in book printing and distribution, Prabhupāda foresaw worldwide printing and distribution of his books—eventually to surpass that in the U.S.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda had created transcendental competition among his disciples. In 1971 he had observed with pleasure Keśava in San Francisco leading the society in Kṛṣṇa book distribution. Prabhupāda had promised that he would leave Los Angeles and stay in San Francisco if Keśava outdistributed his brother, Karandhara. And over the years he had continued to instigate such competition, fanning the fires of book distribution. He would encourage the leaders to send him reports, and then he would respond with letters, raising the book distribution fever even higher.

The whole of ISKCON waited to hear the latest quote from Prabhupāda, inspiring them to go on and on. When Śrīla Prabhupāda had given the lecture in January 1974 stressing, "Distribute books, distribute books, distribute books," several devotees in the audience had vowed on the spot to dedicate their lives to that instruction. And when Prabhupāda had sent the handwritten note down from his room in Los Angeles—"Everyone should go with the Sankirtan Party as soon as possible"—that one line had created a spirit of sacrifice and dedication in the hearts of many disciples, who felt themselves destined to take up that order as their life and soul.

Although Rāmeśvara had been caught up by the waves of the saṅkīrtana ocean from the beginning, Śrīla Prabhupāda cast Rāmeśvara's service when he wrote,

Make program to distribute our books all over the world. Our books are being appreciated by learned circles, so we should take advantage. Whatever progress we have made is simply due to distributing these books. So go on and do not divert your mind for a moment from this.

When devotees in London reported to Śrīla Prabhupāda their increase in book and magazine sales, he responded by inviting them to compete.

I have heard that in San Francisco they are selling daily not less than 75 Kṛṣṇa Books. So I am very much encouraged to hear this. Now take this spirit of transcendental rivalry and consult with Dayananda and the others there in England to become the first-rate book-sellers.

When writing to a sannyāsī disciple preaching in Scotland, where the devotees were perhaps not fully aware of the scope of book distribution in the U.S., Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned the latest book scores from New York and commented, "New York is leading the list."

Śrīla Prabhupāda also inspired the Society as a whole to compete with its previous years' efforts: "Somehow the book distribution must be doubled and tripled as far as possible. Do it." As soon as the BBT library party had been formed, Prabhupāda had told the members to get fifty thousand orders. And he had asked the Rādhā-Dāmodara party to expand to one hundred buses. The competition was particularly high between Los Angeles, the Rādhā-Dāmodara party, and Australia, and Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged them all, like a maestro calling for a fortissimo from the orchestra.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was not giving careless, boastful instructions. The determination and sacrifice required to achieve these seemingly unattainable goals he knew well, and he wanted his devotees to work as he worked, with total dedication. He wanted them to try their utmost. His was the logic of "hunting for the rhinoceros," he said. If a man attempting to shoot a rhinoceros failed, no one would criticize him. But if he succeeded, it would be considered wonderful. Prabhupāda wrote to Rūpānuga,

Your sankirtana reports are very encouraging, especially that one girl, Gauri dasi, has set an all ISKCON women's record of 108 big books. This is very wonderful. Formerly this would have been considered impossible, but now by Kṛṣṇa's grace everything is becoming possible. Encourage them all to increase more and more.

Some devotees became confused by their Godbrothers' and God sisters' rousing calls for competition and rivalry. This seemed like the rivalry of the material world, which they had hoped to leave forever. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, explained the proper attitude of transcendental competition.

Competition and profiteering spirit are always there in the living entity. It is not that they can be artificially removed in some matter. Factually we saw in Russia that by removing competition and profit calculation from society the people were not at all happy, and still these things are going on. So we shall not expect that we are any different. Only difference is, that our profit is for Krishna's pleasure, and our competition is how to please Krishna more than someone else. Even amongst the Gopis there is competition to please Krishna, and there is envy also. But this envy is not material, it is transcendental. They are thinking, Oh, she has done something more wonderful than me, that is very nice, but now let me do something even more wonderful, like that. So I am pleased that you desire for competition with your Godbrothers to spread Krishna Consciousness Movement all over the world by printing our books.

When a traveling sankirtana party from one temple intensively distributed books in another city, the authorities at the local temple would often be disturbed. This problem came before Śrīla

Prabhupāda, who was inevitably called in to judge and to cool down the fires of competition. Prabhupāda wrote to Keśava and Bhūtātmā, who had traveled all the way from San Francisco to London to distribute books but had disturbed the devotees there by their fervor.

Ultimately, it shall be up to the local temple president if the presence of your party is favorable or not. Everything considered, if he agrees, you may stay; otherwise, if he judges it is unfavorable at the time, he may order you to go out. But just to avoid these things, better to arrange in advance with the G.B.C. men concerned. Ours is a cooperative movement, with Kṛṣṇa and the advancement of the Kṛṣṇa movement at the center, and we must continue to sell as many books as possible. But discuss everything amongst yourselves and do it nicely without irritating anyone; that is the art.

Seeing the mighty efforts of the top book distributors, some devotees became envious, or at least dispirited, thinking themselves useless and unable to please Śrīla Prabhupāda. This problem also came before Śrīla Prabhupāda, who replied, "There must always be competition. That gives life. That cannot be separated from life... The perfect society does not eliminate competition, but it eliminates envy, because everyone is weak before Kṛṣṇa."

But competition had its limit, as Prabhupāda explained to a doubting brahmacārī in Florida.

It is not so much important the quantity of books that we distribute, but that we serve Kṛṣṇa as best we can and depend on Him for the result. But it should not come to the point of making us lose our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. When you have these feelings, do not mistake it for enviousness, but take it to be an indirect appreciation of the service done by your other Godbrothers. This is spiritual. In the material world, when someone surpasses us in some way we become angry and plan how to stop him, but in the spiritual world when someone does some better service, we think, "Oh, he has done so nicely. Let me help him to execute his service."

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Competition might have been a catalyst, but by steadfastly distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement were experiencing the essence of loving service to Kṛṣṇa in separation, which is the highest spiritual ecstasy. "Don't try to see God," Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master had often said, "but act in such a way that God sees you." In other words, by submissively acting on the order of the servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda's disciples were sure to attract Kṛṣṇa's loving attention.

The quickest way to catch Kṛṣṇa's attention, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, was to direct another person to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The book distributors, therefore, felt a special reciprocation with their spiritual master, and this impelled them to go on serving and distributing.

Saṅjaya: Philosophically we saw that going out and distributing books was what our spiritual master wanted us to do. We knew that. That was clear to us. We also had a real sense of idealism—that these books and magazines would change the world. Once you come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you actually see how crummy the world really is, how really contaminated things are, how envious people are, and how horrible material life is. You can see that. You don't feel that you yourself can change it, but you feel that whoever gets one of Prabhupāda's books and looks at it will be changed

in a spiritual way. There was no question about it. We also felt a big change would come in the world in the future as Kṛṣṇa consciousness spread. Prabhupāda also said that if people just touch one of these books their lives will change. Our faith was in the books and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Keśava Bhāratī: When you pass out a book, there is a certain reciprocation from Prabhupāda. There was a dramatic difference in our internal experience when a person would take a book compared to just taking some incense or something. We would actually experience Prabhupāda's association all day by distributing those books. We didn't feel left out just because certain devotees were physically closer to Prabhupāda. Book distributors always got strong enlivenment. We would read about Haridāsa Ṭhākura going out and rolling on the ground and begging people to chant. That kind of thing would inspire us.

Vaiṣeṣika: We had Prabhupāda's books and different letters from him. And we also knew that if we distributed lots of books, we could get our name in the newsletter, and we could think of how Prabhupāda would read it. But I was just trying to keep up with the others. Sometimes I would go a couple of hours without giving anyone a book. Everyone else would just be passing them out like crazy. I would try, and people would all but spit in my face. They were pushing me around. It was very heavy for me. I would sometimes just walk off and start crying, it was so heavy. But I knew this book distribution was pleasing to Prabhupāda, and I just wanted to be part of it.

We used to think how Prabhupāda was spending so much time behind a dictating machine just writing these books. We would meditate on how he would sleep just a few hours a day and minimize everything else to write these books. So we were also trying to cut down our other activities and just go out and distribute books. Prabhupāda said a devotee should live in the mood of the six Gosvāmīs, so we were singing those prayers every day. We felt a real connection. Even in the beginning a devotee told me, "Where is Prabhupāda, do you know?" And then he said, "He's in his books." That mood was always there. We always felt that connection.

Jagaddhātṛī-devī dāsī: When I was distributing Prabhupāda's books, I understood that that was the most pleasing thing I could do for him. I was helping him to fulfill his spiritual master's instructions, and so he was pleased. And he was even more pleased if I did it nicely. I always used to hear the story about how Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī would be happy if someone went out and distributed even one magazine, because it's actually the mood of saṅkīrtana, of going out and trying to give mercy to the conditioned souls, that counts.

I always wanted to do welfare work. I like the feeling of doing something for people. So this is the summum bonum of helping people. You are helping them to go back to Godhead. So that was my motivation. And we automatically become purified by bringing other living entities to Kṛṣṇa.

Tripurāri: I got inspired mostly by Prabhupāda's greatness—how he was staunchly following his Guru Mahārāja. It was his Guru Mahārāja's order, and therefore he was doing it. I was never very scholarly or intelligent. I never thought that I had much brains or talent. I was never trained practically in any kind of skill, and I didn't have much education. I took it like that—that I was talking to the most fallen people and that I was the most fallen myself. I was just doing what Prabhupāda wanted, because he wanted. I would pray to Prabhupāda to help me realize why he

wanted book distribution. Then within I would get inspiration, and it would come out in all of my talks about book distribution.

That time that I stayed out at the airport when all the devotees went back with Prabhupāda to the temple very much affected my whole spiritual life. I was very much intimately connected with Prabhupāda. But my closest association with him was by following his instructions and just getting down to work and not trying to enjoy the spiritual master but serve him.

Vṛndāvana-vilāsinī-devī dāśī: When Prabhupāda gave that famous lecture in Los Angeles, "Distribute books, distribute books, distribute books," right then I wanted to take it up. Whenever he wrote to Rāmeśvara, it was really to "Rāmeśvara and Company." We all felt included. We are all eternal book distributors—a team together. And I wanted to be part of it. It was Lord Caitanya's eternal saṅkīrtana party, and we all wanted to be part of it. It's going on in every planet, in every universe. I know it is pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I would relate to book distribution like the battle of Kurukṣetra. It's a battle, but Kṛṣṇa is right there. It's like Kurukṣetra Number Two. I'm sure all book distributors feel like that. You feel like Kṛṣṇa is right there, and He's going to win. You just have to take shelter of Him. You may not win this battle, but you win the overall war. So I always felt connected with Prabhupāda, because he's telling us in his books about the great devotees that we can take shelter of. It's all by his mercy. He's giving us these books, and he's in these books.

Sura: We were so much addicted to selling Prabhupāda's books that we didn't want to do anything else. We would just go straight to the airport and start distributing and not stop, except for maybe a twenty minute lunch break and maybe some reading for twenty minutes—otherwise nonstop until 7:30 or 8:00 at night. We really felt that Śrīla Prabhupāda was protecting us.

One time out at the airport I was given a BBT newsletter. Maybe it was due to the exhaustion or maybe it was due to some false sentimentality or whatever, but I was reading Prabhupāda's remarks about book distribution, and I became very moved. I was by myself at the airport, and I just started crying, because I thought of how devotees all over the world are so beautiful, so wonderful-hearted, distributing books and working so hard. I was just really appreciating Prabhupāda and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Prabhupāda had said something in the newsletter about book distribution, and it just touched me. We were so absorbed in books, books, books, that whenever Prabhupāda would say anything about book distribution, we would go nuts. That meant it was our connection to Prabhupāda. We weren't big guns who could sit at a meeting with Prabhupāda or get personal attention so much. Maybe during some morning walks at the Māyāpur festival we got to sneak in with the sannyāsīs, but otherwise our book distribution was our connection with Prabhupāda. When he would mention something about book distribution, it would be our life and soul.

Lavaṅga-latikā-devī dāśī: Having heard Śrīla Prabhupāda speak and knowing that he was always reading from these books, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and that he was preaching that you have to distribute this knowledge to others made it all very simple. That is, you just knew that this was Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire. He was always telling us that he was giving us this knowledge and that once you have this knowledge, you have to distribute it to others. Śrīla Prabhupāda came to

America to preach with his disciples. So we must do it, because it's Prabhupāda's desire. He spent so much time translating these books to be distributed. You just want to distribute to others, and you want people to have these books in their homes.

* * *

Vṛndāvana, India

April 20, 1975

Śrīla Prabhupāda installed the Deities for the grand opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Almost a thousand disciples were present, and the governor of Uttar Pradesh was the guest of honor. After years of hard endeavor, the grand opening was a climactic triumph for Śrīla Prabhupāda and his movement. While still standing at the altar after having offered the first āratī to Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Prabhupāda addressed the crowd, explaining that this was an international temple, where people from all over the world could come to worship and take shelter of Gaura-Nitai, Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Later that evening, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat in his room with a few G.B.C. men. The buttons on his kurtā open because of the heat, his legs and bare feet extended under the low table, he relaxed, and his men sat close around him in the dim light of the desk lamp. It was a milestone, he said, but still they had to go forward, not merely savor their success. Many things were still required to make the temple and guesthouse operative.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was thinking beyond Vṛndāvana. "This temple construction is so important," he said, "that I'm willing to spend many lakhs to open a temple like this. And yet as important as it is, the book production is even more important." This was a significant reaffirmation of the priority of book production; even while in the midst of this splendid temple opening, he was stressing that book production was more important.

Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed displeased, however, because for months his Caitanya-caritāmṛta had been delayed by his Sanskrit editor. He said with a scowl that although he had finished the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, it remained unpublished. He had also completed all four volumes of the Fourth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and was beginning the Fifth, yet only one volume of the Fourth Canto had been published.

One of the devotees present, not understanding Prabhupāda's point, remarked that since Prabhupāda was going next to Hawaii he would be able to write there in peace and quiet. Prabhupāda replied that he was not encouraged to write when his manuscripts were not being published.

The BBT Press, after several years in New York, was about to relocate in Los Angeles, where Rāmeśvara would become the new BBT Press supervisor. Rāmeśvara, unaware of the delay in publishing the Caitanya-caritāmṛta manuscript, learned of it now, in Vṛndāvana. He promised Prabhupāda that he would immediately get the Press set up in Los Angeles and begin producing Caitanya-caritāmṛta.

That Śrīla Prabhupāda had completed the entire Caitanya-caritāmṛta manuscript in eighteen months during 1973 and 1974 was a remarkable feat. In those same months he had been intensely engaged in many affairs of management while constantly traveling. He had confronted major problems with leaders who had left their posts, he had personally attended to G.B.C. duties in India, and he had dealt with other ISKCON managerial affairs. He had authorized many large BBT loans and had approved the expansion and development of ISKCON in all areas of the world, in addition to responding regularly to large volumes of mail, speaking daily to guests, and giving Bhāgavatam lectures wherever he went. His only time for writing had been on arising at one in the morning, and he had persistently worked two or three hours each day.

While Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled from Vṛndāvana to Australia, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha worked in Los Angeles to establish the new BBT offices. Prabhupāda was still meditating on his completed Caitanya-caritāmṛta manuscript waiting to be published. From Australia he wrote,

The Caitanya-caritamṛta is complete (12 parts) and only 3 parts are published, and now the 5th Canto is almost finished. So why these books are not being published? This is our first business. Immediately these pending books (17 in total) must all be published. Why the delay? The U.S. printer's binding is better than Dai Nippon. So, some may be printed in the U.S. and some in Japan, but the pending books must be finished in a very short time. When I see so many books pending, it does not encourage me to translate. When I see books printed, I become encouraged to write more and more. We can talk this over more in Hawaii. Now you and Hansaduta expedite the publishing work. This is your business. And push on the selling. You request Tripurari Maharaja in this connection along with others. Now, Bhavananda Swami and Gargamuni Swami are there. They are also expert in pushing this on. By combined effort, publish as quickly as possible and immediately Caitanya-caritamṛta should be done.

In Los Angeles Rāmeśvara had only completed the lease arrangements for the new building for the Press. The BBT artists had just arrived, and editors, proofreaders, and other production workers would soon be coming. The Press had purchased a computer typesetter, and the devotees were being trained to use it. Carpenters knocked down walls to build a photo lab and darkroom. Additional plumbing had to be installed, and the entire Press had to be set up within one month. Śrīla Prabhupāda was coming in June, and everything would have to be ready and running.

By the time Śrīla Prabhupāda reached Hawaii in May, the Press in Los Angeles was preparing for operation. Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary phoned Los Angeles often: "Prabhupāda is angry. He keeps talking about the unpublished books. You'd better be prepared when he arrives."

Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha had investigated the necessities and the difficulties in printing the Caitanya-caritāmṛta manuscript, which they concluded would come to seventeen volumes. One of the main problems they discovered was the lack of an expert Bengali editor.

Most of the Caitanya-caritāmṛta was in Bengali. Although the BBT editors were experienced in Sanskrit, because they were not proficient in Bengali, the work was progressing slowly. Also Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted many paintings in his books, and the art department would need many months to meet his requests.

Never before had the BBT lagged so far behind Śrīla Prabhupāda. Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha, straining their brains to produce books quickly and efficiently, devised a stepped-up production schedule. By the old schedule they could publish a book every three or four months, but on the new schedule they decided they could produce a book a month. In that way, they would eventually catch up with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Rāmeśvara was eager to present Prabhupāda with this plan when he came to Los Angeles.

More phone calls came from Prabhupāda's secretary. Prabhupāda had heard about the preparation of the Press buildings, but he had also heard that his name had not been displayed on the front of the BBT building. He was always insistent to preserve ISKCON's disciplic succession, foreseeing that unless ISKCON stressed A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami as the founder ācārya, in the future persons might claim their rights of ISKCON leadership or of ownership of ISKCON properties. In the rush for completing the buildings, the BBT managers had overlooked this important detail.

June 20, 1975

On arriving in Los Angeles, Śrīla Prabhupāda received a joyous welcome. He was accompanied by leading sannyāsīs and G.B.C. secretaries, including Kīrtanānanda Swami, Viṣṇujana Swami, Brahmānanda Swami, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, and others. Later, sitting in his room—one of his favorites in all of ISKCON—he spoke only briefly about the backlog of unprinted books. He seemed mildly disturbed but said little. He was very pleased, however, to see the temple and the Deities of Rukmiṇī-Dvārakādhiśa.

In his short arrival speech he had explained why he was so urgently pressing his disciples to produce his books. "I have no personal qualification," he had said from the plushly upholstered vyāsāsana, "but I simply try to satisfy my guru, that's all. My Guru Mahārāja asked me that, 'If you get some money, you print books.' So there was a private meeting, talking. Some of my important Godbrothers also were there—it was in Rādhā-kunda. So Guru Mahārāja was speaking to me that, 'Since we have got this Baghbazar marble temple, there has been so much dissension. And everyone thinking who will occupy this room or that room. I wish therefore to sell this temple and the marble and print some books.' Yes, so I took up this from his mouth, that he is very fond of books. And he told me personally, 'If you get some money, print books.' Therefore I am stressing on this point—Where is book? Where is book? So kindly help me. That is my request. Print as many books as possible in as many languages as possible, and distribute throughout the whole world. Then the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will automatically increase."

The next morning, while walking on Venice Beach, Śrīla Prabhupāda delivered an extraordinary ultimatum. Surrounded by devotees, he walked along, poking the sand softly with his cane. "These seventeen volumes unpublished," he began, "are a great problem for our movement."

"Yes, Prabhupāda," Rāmeśvara responded, attentive and concerned. The other devotees also nodded, commiserating. Something must be done.

"Yes," Prabhupāda continued, "they must be published immediately."

"Yes, Prabhupāda," Rāmeśvara replied obediently.

"So I think they can be printed in two months," Śrīla Prabhupāda said conclusively.

Rāmeśvara wasn't sure he had heard correctly. The Press had only just opened. The artists didn't even have the lights in their room. Two months was illogical, impossible. Now was the moment to tell Śrīla Prabhupāda the plan for increased production. Rāmeśvara stepped closer.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," he began, "we've been meeting about this, and now that the Press is finally here and established, I think we can increase production four times. We think that now we can go from producing one book every four months to producing one of your books every month." Now both Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha were walking together beside Śrīla Prabhupāda, with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Brahmānanda Swami walking on his other side.

"One book every month," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, as if thinking out loud and considering it. "That means over one year. It is not fast enough." The other devotees looked over at Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha, who glanced at each other.

"You have to do all the books in two months' time," Śrīla Prabhupāda said again. They had clearly heard it this time, and the two managers were stunned in disbelief.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," Rāmeśvara said, "I think that's impossible. Maybe we can go faster..."

Śrīla Prabhupāda suddenly stopped walking. Planting his cane firmly in the sand, he turned to Rāmeśvara and said, without anger but very gravely, "Impossible is a word found in the fool's dictionary."

Suddenly Rāmeśvara realized his spiritual life was on the line. To say "impossible" now would mean he had no faith in Kṛṣṇa's representative, no faith in the power of God. He must throw away his material estimations and rational common sense.

While Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha stood speechless, Śrīla Prabhupāda resumed walking, accompanied by the others. The two devotees hurried to catch up, but now everyone looked at them as if to say, "Come on. Stop doubting. You have to do it." Rāmeśvara asked Śrīla Prabhupāda if he could discuss this with the other devotees at the Press and then report back. "Oh, yes," Prabhupāda replied, "whatever is required." Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha dropped back, while Śrīla Prabhupāda and the others continued down the beach.

Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to the temple and toured the new Press facilities—a graphic arts building and an editorial building. While walking outside on a second-floor veranda, he noticed below a two-foot strip of bare earth running between the two buildings. He seemed annoyed and said that they should plant grass there.

In the layout room a transparency of baby Kṛṣṇa carrying Nanda Mahārāja's shoes was on the light table, and Śrīla Prabhupāda began laughing when he saw it. He approved of the new typesetting

equipment, which worked faster than the previous equipment, and when the devotees demonstrated it for him, he remarked that in India he had dreamed of having such a Press.

In Rādhāvallabha's office Prabhupāda sat in the production manager's chair and looked up at the large bulletin board that displayed all the steps in the production of a book. He laughed and said, "For someone like me, this makes it even more complicated."

Śrīla Prabhupāda walked into every room in the two buildings and saw all the equipment. This modern technology was fine, he concluded, as long as they could use it to meet the deadline of seventeen books in two months; otherwise, their equipment was like the technology of the material scientists who tried to go to the moon—useless.

All through the morning program in the temple, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha tried to concentrate on chanting their japa and on Prabhupāda's class, but all they could think of was arranging for the production of seventeen volumes in two months. And by the time they met with the Press workers, they had become convinced it could be done. It was as if some mystical power was going to descend. Somehow or other it could be done. So they presented the plan and convinced the other workers.

"It can be done," Rāmeśvara said later, talking with Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Hmmm," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied.

But there were some conditions, Rāmeśvara said. For the Bengali editing to go smoothly, the editors would have to be able to regularly consult Śrīla Prabhupāda. Immediately Prabhupāda agreed, adding that he was prepared to stay in Los Angeles as long as necessary to insure that they met the two-month deadline. Another condition Rāmeśvara raised was that the artists would be working as quickly as humanly possible, but the paintings might not be of the best quality. "A blind uncle is better than no uncle," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. When Rāmeśvara mentioned that the artists would have many technical questions, Prabhupāda agreed to make time to answer them. He also agreed that photographs of Indian holy places connected with Caitanya līlā could be used to supplement the paintings.

After their meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha felt that they had a chance. They left Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, running down the stairs. The marathon was on.

SPL 46: Preaching to America: Part 1

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Preaching to America:

Part 1

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda had said he would stay in Los Angeles, he soon decided to follow his original travel plans. Feeling compelled to see to the welfare of his disciples around the country, he left on a tour of thirteen ISKCON centers in the U.S. and Canada. About half a dozen of his sannyāsī disciples traveled with him.

Denver

June 27, 1975

Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleasantly surprised to see the brick church building that was now a Kṛṣṇa temple. The temple hall was spacious, and afternoon sunshine streamed into the room. He beheld the small golden forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on the altar and then walked to the rear of the hall, where he sat on the vyāsāsana, allowing the devotees to bathe his feet. These devotees, unaccustomed to being with their spiritual master, were awkward in performing the standard formalities. But they were enthusiastic and happy.

Sitting on the floor before Śrīla Prabhupāda, Daśaratha began singing O he vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura, accompanying himself on the harmonium. Śrīla Prabhupāda liked his singing and, when the song was finished, asked, "You know the meaning?"

Daśaratha replied, "“O venerable Vaiṣṇava, O ocean of mercy, please be merciful unto your servant.”"

Another devotee added, "“I pray for the shade of your lotus feet.”"

"Yes," Prabhupāda acknowledged, and he began to speak about the song's author, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. He then quoted another song by Narottama dāsa, chādiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is for nistāra, he said. "Nistāra means to be liberated from the capture of māyā. When we hear songs by the Vaiṣṇavas, that is called liberation."

Although the devotees had heard before of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and of liberation, they listened especially attentively now. Here was the Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura in person, come to teach them to control their passions, to impart to them the strength to carry out the saṅkīrtana movement, and to bless them, as Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura described, "with one drop of faith with which to attain the great treasure of the holy name."

"So I am very glad to see this temple," Śrīla Prabhupāda said to the group of about forty devotees. "You have purchased it? That's nice. Very good space. And the devotees here are very nice. So, our process is very simple—that we dedicate our life to the service of the Vaiṣṇava, and according to his direction, we engage in śravaṇaṁ kīrtanam, hearing and chanting of Viṣṇu. And refrain from the sinful activities. Then life is successful. We do not require to be very learned or very rich man or to take birth in very high family."

For driving Śrīla Prabhupāda to the park, a friend of the Denver temple had lent his Lincoln Continental, formerly Richard Nixon's presidential limousine. Brahmānanda Swami pointed out the car's luxurious features to Prabhupāda, including bulletproof glass windows.

"So bullet is expected also?" Prabhupāda laughed.

Brahmānanda remarked that the world leaders were always in anxiety. Prabhupāda agreed—in the material world there was danger at every step.

He began talking of Indian politics: Indira Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan in bitter disagreement. "Both of them are in distressed position," Prabhupāda said. "I am thinking of writing them on the basis of our Bhagavad-gītā. Do you think it is advised?" When Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned that Indira Gandhi occasionally went to see her guru, Ānandamayī, Brahmānanda remarked that her guru had commented favorably about the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

"So, what do you think?" Prabhupāda asked his sannyāsīs, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Bhavānanda, and Satsvarūpa. "Shall I write? Hmmm? I have made a draft of a letter this night. So you come and see. Let us take a chance. We want good for everyone, and this is the only medicine, Hare Kṛṣṇa, for all wrongs. Para-duḥkha-dukhī. People are suffering."

The devotees agreed the letters would be a good idea, although they doubted whether the politicians would take the advice or even read such letters.

Prabhupāda then asked about the public's response to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Denver.

"They get nice attendance on Sundays," Satsvarūpa answered. "Many people come."

"There is good hope," Prabhupāda affirmed.

"Good book distribution here, too."

Prabhupāda nodded. "That is the most successful. Wherever book distribution is going on nicely, that is successful. Because people are in gross ignorance, they are taking this temporary life as everything. Very horrible condition. We are trying to explain what is the actual life."

They arrived at the park, which was filled with tall old pines, maples, and oaks. Getting out of the car, Prabhupāda stood facing a pond. In the distance he could see the Denver skyline and the Rocky Mountains. He could hear the quacking of ducks and geese from the pond.

A second carload of devotees arrived, and Prabhupāda and his followers began walking along a paved path beside the lake. "Very nice park," Prabhupāda remarked, "and not far away."

They soon came upon a large modern building, the Museum of Natural History. "That means Darwin's theory, that's all," said Prabhupāda. "Their whole civilization is based on this Darwin's theory. How long you shall keep history? Do you know what is the history of the sun, when it was created, when it came into appearance? Can Darwin give us the history of the sun, or the moon, or

the sky? Where is the history? There is history, but where is your history? You simply imagine, "There was a chunk, and it became manifested as the sun, moon. And I am also this.' What do you actually know? How has this cosmic manifestation come into existence?"

The sun rose with dazzling, golden rays and quickly warmed the air. The devotees offered Prabhupāda information about Denver, "the mile- high city." It was good for health, they said. Prabhupāda said the climate was as in Punjab, the upcountry in India. He also heard how Colorado was known as "cow country" because its main industry was slaughter.

Prabhupāda walked past a zoo and down a hill. He passed a Civil War cannon and saw many colorful flower beds, expansive lawns, and everywhere the tall pines. Although the air seemed chilly for July, the brightness of the rising sun was unusual, and the natural scenery of the park stood out sharply. Śrīla Prabhupāda also appeared bathed in golden light as he walked briskly, wrapped in his gray cādar, talking from time to time with his disciples.

Prabhupāda mentioned Gopal Agarwal, the man at whose home he had first stayed after arriving in America in 1965. Gopal's father, he said, was a very rich man in Mathurā, and Gopal had come to America to be an electrical engineer. He was not doing as well as he would have by staying in India, Prabhupāda said. Gopal's wife, Sally, used to say, "My husband is a lost child of his parents."

"People are working so hard day and night for these temporary years," Prabhupāda said, "although by laboring less than that, they can go back to Godhead. Just to get a nice car, a nice wife and a few children by working so hard. And by the same labor, if he devotes himself to Kṛṣṇa consciousness then he goes back home, back to Godhead. And what is wrong there? We have got so many Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. What is wrong there, compared to these ordinary karmīs? Hmm? Are you unhappy? What do you think? All their efforts will be finished, and after death they will become a cat or a dog or a tree."

Devotee: "Sometimes, Śrīla Prabhupāda, even if we explain this and the people seem to understand, still they won't do anything about it."

Prabhupāda: "So you have to constantly poke them. Just like when a man is sleeping, you have to call him constantly, "Mr. John! Mr. John! Wake up, you rascal! Why are you sleeping? You have got this opportunity of human form of life. Now get up! Take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and solve all your problems.' "

Devotee: "Some people say that if we want to do this it's all right, but we shouldn't preach and insist to them. Everyone has his own way."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "But you are a human being You rascal, you are sleeping! And we are just trying to awaken you. Suppose a child was going off to one side where there is danger. We are human beings, so we shall say, "No, no, go to the right.' We shall try to save him. That is our business, to do good to others. That is the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Not that, "This man is going to hell, so let him go to hell. But at least I am happy.' That is not humane."

Devotee: "A lot of times, Śrīla Prabhupāda, they feel we're just escaping material life. They say we don't have jobs and that we should work for a living."

Prabhupāda (addressing an imaginary challenger): "You rascal! You have no money—you work. But we are rich men. We are Kṛṣṇa's sons. So why shall I work like you, an ass? An ass will work unnecessarily. We are not asses."

Bhagavad-gītā, Prabhupāda said, establishes Lord Kṛṣṇa as the proprietor of everything. The servants of Kṛṣṇa, therefore, should not be expected to work hard like asses. Asses work hard, not human beings. This was also the instruction of Rṣabhadeva in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Rṣabhadeva told His sons that human life is not meant for working hard simply for food and sex enjoyment. That was the business of hogs.

Prabhupāda: "Tell them they are working like hogs, and we are living like human beings. That is the difference. If somebody does not work hard like a hog, does that mean he is escaping?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to vigorously develop his theme. He argued very seriously and yet in a delightful way, showing the fortune of one who becomes a servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The devotees could not refrain from smiling and laughing as they hurried to keep up with his pace and with his Kṛṣṇa conscious logic.

Prabhupāda: "I was a student of economics. There we learned Marshall's theory. He says that human nature is such that unless a person has obligation, he will not work. That is the beginning of economics. If one already has something sufficient to eat, then he will not work. So if we have sufficient to eat, why shall we work? What is the answer? This is not escaping, it is coming to the light. To not work and yet get our necessities is comfort. But to work hard just to get the bare necessities of life, that is for the hogs and dogs."

Devotee: "They have no faith or trust that this can be done."

Prabhupāda: "See us, you rascal! See! Open your eyes! See that we have no business. We have no food stock. Still we are not worried. We do not know what we shall eat in the evening, but still we are not worried. I came to your country without any subsistence." Prabhupāda argued that man's economic necessities could be easily settled by keeping cows and land. He said that men have made an unnecessary, complex arrangement just for maintaining the body, thereby forgetting the purpose of human life. When a devotee contended that not everyone had the opportunity to get land, Prabhupāda said that this was simply mismanagement. There was plenty of land in America.

Devotee: "Śrīla Prabhupāda, they accuse us of being parasites."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "No. A parasite means if he takes others' property and tries to enjoy it. But we are not enjoying others' property. We are enjoying our father's property. *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*. Kṛṣṇa is the proprietor. Why do you say parasite? We are good children of Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa says, "Don't work. I shall give you everything." Actually Kṛṣṇa says that: "Why are you working so hard? Just surrender to Me and I will give you protection—whatever you want." So we are giving everything. Why say parasite?"

The devotees were well aware that Śrīla Prabhupāda did work, traveling constantly, managing his worldwide Kṛṣṇa conscious society, rising in the middle of the night to translate Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. And his disciples also worked hard. But they did not work like animals and animal-like persons for things that would be destroyed in time, and they did not work at horrible enterprises that ruined the best part of human nature. They did not work like asses and claim they had no time left in the day to chant the holy name of God.

Prabhupāda: “Now this is a nice park, but nobody is coming here. We Kṛṣṇa conscious people, we are taking advantage. So they are escaping or we are escaping? Just see how foolish they are. They work so hard, but they are not taking advantage. But we are taking. So our policy is that you work hard, and we go and take from you. This is not escaping, this is intelligence.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda's example was a delightful revelation to the devotees, and they laughed at the obvious truth. Here they were, walking so pleasantly with their spiritual master, and yet no one else was coming to enjoy the park.

Prabhupāda: “But as soon as we ask, ‘You also come and join,’ they will not. They say, ‘No, we shall work like this.’ We are asking everyone, ‘Come here,’ but they will not come. That is their enviousness. Therefore they say we are escaping and living at the cost of others. They see that we have got so many cars and the devotees' faces are bright. We are eating nicely and have no problems. But if we ask them to come, then it is very difficult. If we ask them to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and dance, oh, it is a very big, heavy task for them. As soon as they will come, they will know that there is no tea, no liquor, no meat, no cigarette. So you can say that we are escaping these things. But we are not escaping happiness. They are escaping happiness.”

When Śrīla Prabhupāda did not have a specific engagement in Denver, a few of his men sometimes gathered in his room. Occasionally he would provoke some of them into a mock debate with him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Everything must come from something. No one can deny that. Now we give our challenge: Do you know what that Absolute Truth is?”

Brahmānanda: “We know there is an Absolute Truth, but at this time we cannot directly say what it is.”

Prabhupāda immediately replied that if a person admits not knowing the Absolute Truth, then that person has no grounds for rejecting the Vedic explanation of the Absolute. That person cannot deny Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Truth. “If you don't know the philosophy,” Prabhupāda said, “then you must agree to hear from an authority who does.”

Satsvarūpa: “Yes, that argument is logical, and we should at least listen to you. But we have heard so many versions of the truth. Why should we accept your version?”

Prabhupāda: "That is like saying, 'I have come across so many counterfeit coins. Why should I think there are real coins?' There are counterfeit coins, and there must also be genuine coins. It is our misfortune if we are unable to distinguish the real coins from the counterfeit coins."

Another sannyāsī challenged that the Kṛṣṇa conscious version was dogmatic, since there were many truths and many gods. But the Absolute Truth is one, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, because God is one. God has no competitors. If a person does not accept Kṛṣṇa as God, then he has to present someone who is more fully God than Kṛṣṇa. But if someone does not know who is God, then that person cannot deny Kṛṣṇa.

"If you speak that way," Prabhupāda continued, "then you are being dogmatic. You do not know what God is, yet dogmatically you are saying that Kṛṣṇa is not God."

Prabhupāda compared those who deny the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa to owls who do not open their eyes to see the sunlight. Such persons demand to see God, but when God comes before them personally or when He sends His pure representative, they will not see.

On another morning walk in Denver, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami told Prabhupāda that some of the devotees were reading books about health diets and were avoiding the prasādam offered to the Deity in the temple. Śrīla Prabhupāda immediately replied that this was not good. Fasting, he acknowledged, was good for health, but the devotees should not become weak. They should take prasādam and do their work.

When one of the devotees told Prabhupāda he got drowsy after eating heavily of grains and therefore preferred fruit, Prabhupāda said that was all right; fruit was offered to the Deity. When Yadubara said that in Los Angeles the families often cooked in their own homes instead of taking the prasādam of the Deity, Bhavānanda Goswami testified how wonderful it was at the Māyāpur festival when hundreds of devotees sat down and took prasādam together.

Prabhupāda: "Yes, what is the difficulty? Capātis, rice, they are innocent foods. What is the difficulty?"

Harikeśa: "A lot of devotees are quoting you. They say there is no need to eat grains and that you said that grains were for the animals."

Prabhupāda: "But I am eating grains."

Harikeśa: "I tell them that."

Prabhupāda: "They say, 'Prabhupāda says.' Then you believe that."

Prabhupāda said that devotees should not listen to health advice if it resulted in their refusing to honor the Lord's prasādam.

Prabhupāda: "Therefore, follow taking prasādam. Let whatever may happen."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "Let us die eating prasādam."

Prabhupāda: "Yes. [Laughter.] That is devotee. But we must prepare very first class foodstuffs. And then, where is the complaint, if it is first class?"

Returning from the walk, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to discuss the topic in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class: "I was hearing that we are not taking prasādam—especially the gṛhasthas. No. That is not good. You should take prasādam." Prabhupāda described how bhakti-yoga begins with controlling the tongue—by chanting and by eating kṛṣṇa-prasādam.

"So in our branches," he continued, "all the devotees take prasādam together. That is nice. Why we should not be liking to take prasādam in the temple? What is the fault? No, this is not good. Everyone should take prasādam.... It is called prasāda-sevā [service], not prasādam enjoyment. Prasādam means giving service. Prasādam is as good as Kṛṣṇa and should be respected as good as Kṛṣṇa. So one must have faith that it is not material. Those who are attached to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and are attached to the service, they should take prasādam—first-class prasādam. Everyone likes the taste of prasādam."

* * *

July 2, 1975

On the plane from Denver to Chicago, Prabhupāda scanned a Time magazine essay on crime, a cover story entitled, "Crime: Why and What To Do?" Landing at O'Hare Airport, he was greeted by hundreds of cheering devotees and the press.

"Your Divine Grace," Śrī Govinda, the Chicago temple president, said, pushing forward, "this is Ms. Jones from NBC television."

"How do you do?" smiled Ms. Jones, and several other reporters held microphones before Prabhupāda. "I would like to know what the occasion is. Why are you visiting Chicago?"

"Just now I have seen one article in Time magazine," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied. He raised his right hand in an instructing gesture and leaned against the cane he held in his left hand. "It was four or five pages," he continued—" 'Crime: Why and How to Solve It?' If you are serious, then you can take our method and suggestions. Then you can stop this crime."

"You have a way to stop the crime?"

"Oh, yes, I have."

"Can you explain a little bit more how you do it?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda nodded. "That we have to suggest. The social, political, educational, cultural—everything has to be changed. So if you come, we can give you in details how it can be done."

Ms. Jones dropped the issue and asked Prabhupāda how he felt about his welcome. She seemed unnerved by the devotees crowding around to see and hear Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"By God's grace," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "wherever I go they welcome me like that."

Ms. Jones: "Are you used to anything a bit more serene?"

"Serene?" Prabhupāda thoughtfully considered the word as they all stood together in the midst of the noisy, heavily trafficked airport. "Of course, our whole propaganda is serene," he said. "Yes. We are distributing God consciousness. It is the most serene movement. People have to learn it very nicely."

"Thank you," said Ms. Jones. She had gotten enough.

But Prabhupāda added a last word. "My message is to stop the crimes of your country. This is my sum and substance. You have read the article in Time magazine, 'Crime and How to Stop It'? So if you take my advice, that can be stopped."

"The world is simply full of criminals," Prabhupāda continued, seated in the back seat of the car as they pulled away from the airport's entrance. "Crime means pāpī, sinful." To Śrīla Prabhupāda it seemed to make no difference that he was sitting in a car with a few disciples and not speaking with the press. "If simply by law you want to suppress them, it will not be successful. Deliver them. Then you also come along with them. Not that these criminals only should be delivered, and you will go on continuing with criminal activities, slaughterhouse and killing the child in the womb. You are criminal yourself. The whole state."

Śrīla Prabhupāda sat waiting for his massage to begin. His regular daily schedule was to take a massage at 11:30 A.M., before bathing and taking prasādam. But today, because of his plane travel, his routine was interrupted. Nevertheless, he wanted to follow his general program as far as possible. Upendra was getting mustard oil and the mat for Śrīla Prabhupāda to sit on.

"So we can solve this," Prabhupāda said to the few disciples with him. "Why not invite them to hear us, how we can solve? We can arrange big, big meetings on this point. 'Crime: Why and What To Do?' A very suitable headline it is."

Prabhupāda continued to develop a Kṛṣṇa conscious analysis of crime. As long as society violates the laws of nature, he said, there must be crime. He thought it significant that, according to the Time article, the leaders of the country were actually wondering what to do about the increasing crime rate and that they were admitting they didn't know the solution. "Now," he said, "our business is to give the solution to these leaders, if they actually want the welfare of the country."

All the problems could be solved by Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Śrīla Prabhupāda had often said, and now he was eager to tackle the particular problem of crime. America's leaders were admitting their bewilderment, and if they were actually sincere, then they might accept the Kṛṣṇa conscious solution. Prabhupāda was keen to preach to the government leaders; Kṛṣṇa consciousness was meant especially for them. Bhagavad-gītā stated that the rājarṣis, or saintly kings, should

disseminate the teachings of the Gītā to the citizens. But were the leaders actually serious? Śrīla Prabhupāda wondered. He was serious, and he anticipated the special opportunity that might arise here in Chicago to preach to the leaders about ending crime.

While sitting with a group of disciples in his room, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for a particular Bhāgavatam verse to be read, and he gave the opening Sanskrit, *kāmasya nendriya-prītiḥ*.

Harikeśa read, "A completely bewildered material civilization is wrongly directed toward the fulfillment of desires in sense gratification. In such civilization, in all spheres of life, the ultimate end is sense gratification. In politics, social service, altruism, philanthropy and ultimately in religion or even in salvation, the very same tint of sense gratification is ever-increasingly predominant. In the political field leaders of men fight with one another to fulfill their personal sense gratification."

Śrīla Prabhupāda interrupted, "Now in India this is happening. All these things are foreseen. I have already discussed all this in the purport. Then?"

Harikeśa continued reading: "The voters adore the so-called leaders only when they promise sense gratification. As soon as the voters are dissatisfied in their own sense satisfaction, they dethrone the leaders. The leaders must always dissatisfy the voters by not satisfying their senses."

Again Prabhupāda interrupted. "There are protest meetings and processions, but nobody will be able to satisfy them, because they do not know how to keep the mass of people satisfied. These rascals, they do not know. I have always said they are rascals. Now they ask, 'What to do?' They will face so many problems. 'What to do?'—this is the beginning. The whole world will be in chaos if they do not take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So many 'What to do?' will come. Just tell them that here is the remedy. Now it is the time for preaching. They are thinking. They are sleeping, but now they are thinking what to do. They are blindly following sense gratification, and now it has come to the stage of what to do.

"This is the opportunity for preaching. We are the only persons who can give solution. There is no other group or any man in the world. We are only. So let them take advantage of our knowledge and apply. Now all the sannyāsīs have got the good opportunity to preach."

The ISKCON temple was in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, and on July 4, the day after Prabhupāda's arrival, Edgar Vaneman Jr., the mayor of Evanston, came to visit Prabhupāda in his apartment.

Immediately Prabhupāda referred to the Time news article on crime. "The remedy," he said, "is to train first-class men." He told the mayor briefly of the Vedic society's four natural divisions, pointing out that society had become so degraded that everyone is in the fourth class, the lowest class—and sinking. The only hope was to train some first-class and second-class men.

"We certainly need a new approach," admitted Mayor Vaneman, "because we're not being successful now."

After less than half an hour's conversation, Śrīla Prabhupāda was ready to make a bold request. Previously Jagadīśa, the G.B.C. secretary for Chicago, had mentioned that a very large municipally-owned building across the street was vacant. Śrīla Prabhupāda decided to ask the mayor to donate it. Already he had explained to the mayor that Kṛṣṇa consciousness could stop crime and drug addiction, and he now asked Harikeśa to read a letter by Dr. Stillson Judah, author of *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture*. In the letter Dr. Judah appreciated Kṛṣṇa consciousness for "transforming lives from drug-addicted hippies to loving servants of Kṛṣṇa and humanity."

"So we can stop this, provided we are given the facility to work on," said Prabhupāda. When the mayor replied yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda made his request.

"So I was thinking," Prabhupāda said, "just in front of here there is a very nice house, Merrywood, a big house. You have knowledge about this house?"

The mayor replied that this building was to be the new city hall of Evanston. Śrīla Prabhupāda had not been told about this, and he hesitated, while the mayor spoke of how the city's offices, scattered for so long in nine different locations, could now all be together in this one building.

"But this is more important," Prabhupāda said. "City service is going on, but criminals are increasing. So why not give us a little opportunity?"

Mayor Vaneman explained politely that he would have to talk with the city manager, tactfully excusing himself from commitment.

"If we get a good place," Prabhupāda continued, "with the cooperation of the authorities, then our simple program is, as Professor Judah has remarked, to turn drug-addicted hippies into devotees. We shall invite everyone to come and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and take prasādam. I began this movement in New York, alone. And these boys gradually came to me. But my process was this: chanting and giving them prasādam. Everyone will be glad to accept it. They will read these books. These devotees here are practical examples. I am a poor Indian. I did not bribe them, neither have I any money." Prabhupāda laughed. "So now they have dedicated their lives for this purpose. So I want to do it on a large scale."

But there were practical alternatives. Perhaps, Prabhupāda suggested, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement could use part of the building for a year. He continued describing the efficacy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But the mayor had little else to say. Prabhupāda had prasādam brought in and asked his guest if he had any further inquiry.

"No, I really don't think I do," Mayor Vaneman replied, "but I think I'd like to learn more about your movement. And I have enjoyed talking and listening to you, and I appreciate it."

After the mayor left, one of Prabhupāda's disciples questioned why they would want such a big building. The Chicago temple was large and not at all crowded.

"My idea is," Prabhupāda said, "I want to draw the attention of the authorities. If they cooperate, then we can push on our movement more vigorously."

"But with our present location here, we cannot?" a devotee asked.

"We are doing it on a small scale," Prabhupāda explained. "It is going on. But if we get support from the authorities, we can push on in a larger scale."

Lieutenant David Mozee, public relations representative of the Chicago police department, was interested in Śrīla Prabhupāda's idea for stopping crime, and Śrīla Prabhupāda offered his simple proposal. The government should give ISKCON a large building, where the devotees could regularly hold mass kīrtanas and distribute prasādam, and gradually people would become purified. Lieutenant Mozee, like Mayor Vaneman, was respectful and interested.

"Unless you clean the heart," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "you cannot stop criminality simply by laws. The laws are already known by the thief and murderer, but still they commit, because the heart is unclean. And our process is to cleanse the heart."

"A very difficult task, sir," said Lieutenant Mozee.

Prabhupāda replied that it wasn't difficult; he was already doing it on a small scale. "They are faced with the problem 'Why crime and what to do?'" he said, "and we are giving the answer. So you take advantage of it. Why crime? We are saying because they are godless. And what to do? Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and take prasādam. Now if you like you can take. Otherwise we are doing our own business. Just like a poor medical man—he is also giving medicine. But if he is given facility, he can open a big hospital. That is our proposition. We are already doing that business, but if we get facility from the authorities then we can open a big place, a big hospital. And the problem is already big. Otherwise, why are they saying, 'What to do?'"

Illinois state assemblyman John Porter, who came with his wife, also asked about the solution to crime, but he had a more direct, personal interest in spiritual life. Was it possible, he asked, to make spiritual advancement without living in the temple? Śrīla Prabhupāda told him yes, if he chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, which he could do anywhere. And he should read the standard books of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Mr. Porter also inquired about the Kṛṣṇa conscious understanding of certain Christian theological points, such as original sin and salvation. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, did not indulge in discussing theoretical or comparative religion but emphasized the necessity of strictly following the instructions given by God or His representative. "The main business," Prabhupāda said, "is to understand God."

Mr. Porter seemed unlikely to help the devotees get a large building, but he had inquired humbly about spiritual life. Prabhupāda's unstinting deliverance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not conditional. If anyone sincerely inquired, be he assemblyman or criminal, Śrīla Prabhupāda was always eager to give him the mercy of Lord Caitanya.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Chicago visit included several important functions at the temple. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Viṣṇujana Swami had come to Chicago to see Śrīla Prabhupāda and to recommend

for initiation seventy-five new men who had joined their Rādhā-Dāmodara traveling saṅkīrtana party. And at the end of the week Prabhupāda would be attending a Ratha-yatra procession in downtown Chicago.

Each morning he lectured in the large hall at the Evanston temple before several hundred devotees, speaking about the life of Ajāmila. Each day he would tell more of the history of the sinner Ajāmila, who was saved at the time of death by calling out the name of God, Nārāyaṇa. On the fourth morning Prabhupāda was explaining how Ajāmila had named one of his sons Nārāyaṇa.

"So the idea is that by God's grace, in the beginning of his life Ajāmila engaged himself to be Kṛṣṇa conscious and was initiated. Then years later Kṛṣṇa gave him the advice, "All right, you keep this youngest son's name Nārāyaṇa. Because you'll be naturally attached to this body, and you will call him, "Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa, please come here. Nārāyaṇa, take your food. Nārāyaṇa, take your drink." So you will chant Nārāyaṇa.' "

Śrīla Prabhupāda suddenly became stunned, unable to speak. Such a thing had happened before, but rarely. He remained in trance, while a pregnant silence held the room. The devotees could see that Prabhupāda was experiencing a powerful spiritual emotion. Many of them felt that when he had called out "Nārāyaṇa," he had come face to face with Nārāyaṇa; he was seeing Kṛṣṇa, who was showing how very pleased He was with His pure devotee.

Surely Kṛṣṇa was very pleased with Prabhupāda, and although Prabhu pāda was fully engaged with the details of his movement within the material world, Kṛṣṇa was with him, giving him assurance from the spiritual world. For the devotees this moment confirmed the existence of the spiritual world and confirmed that Prabhupāda belonged to that world and was only visiting the material world to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Most of the devotees were neophytes, still attached to the material and having little vision of the spiritual. But now they could see the spiritual world through Śrīla Prabhupāda's ecstatic trance.

After about a minute, Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to external consciousness. "All right," he said. And then, with the same words he used to end all his lectures, he said, "Thank you very much." Then devotees began a rousing, melodic kīrtana. It had been a special moment, and they kept it in their hearts.

Śrīla Prabhupāda held a press conference at the Sheraton Chicago, and the turnout by TV and the press was good. Sitting on a cushion on a platform, surrounded by his sannyāsis, Prabhupāda lectured to a group of media people, who sat patiently. He introduced his topic as "Talking about the spiritual existence of the living being," and described the unavoidable miseries of the material world and how to transcend them by learning to love God and thus return to the eternal, spiritual world. Those persons endeavoring to attain this spiritual goal are first-class men, he said, and he described the four natural social divisions. On concluding, he called for questions.

A reporter challenged that the four divisions of society were contrary to everything in American tradition, but Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that only training was required. America was training doctors, engineers, lawyers, and America could train some first-class men.

Woman reporter: "Where do women fit into this social structure? You keep referring to a man."

Prabhupāda replied that a woman was a man's (her husband's) assistant. If a woman was faithful to a first-class man (a brāhmaṇa), then she also became first class. If she was married to a second-class man (a kṣatriya), then she would be considered second class. If she was married to a third-class man (a vaiśya), then she was third class. According to the status of her husband, she became first, second, third, or fourth.

Woman reporter: "You mean she's not qualified as first, second, or third class until she's married?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Yes, a woman requires protection. In childhood she should be protected by the father, in youth by the husband, and in old age by the elderly sons."

The same reporter asked if Prabhupāda thought Indira Gandhi was having political trouble because she was a woman and therefore incapable.

"Why are you trying to put me in the emergency law?" Prabhupāda laughed. He then quoted Cāṇakya Paṇḍita: "Never trust a woman or a politician."

Prabhupāda had created a sensation, and within a few hours Chicago's radio and TV stations were talking of the news conference, concentrating almost entirely on his comments about women. A woman alderman, scheduled to visit Prabhupāda, phoned to say that she was cancelling because of Śrīla Prabhupāda's expressed attitudes toward women. A TV station phoned and requested to come over that evening to do an interview.

While the Chicago news reporters wrote their stories for the evening and morning editions, Prabhupāda's comments were further picked up by United Press International and Associated Press wire services. Śrīla Prabhupāda had wanted to reach the public with his Kṛṣṇa conscious message, and therefore he had arrived in Chicago with the specific idea of broadcasting his solution to crime; but now he had hit on a topic that was attracting far more attention. He had had the boldness to assert, in the midst of America's predominant mood of women's liberation, woman's real place in society.

The devotees were excited by the controversy and were eager to understand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy more deeply and to present it exactly.

They complained that none of the reporters had delved deeply or allowed Prabhupāda to express his ideas of spiritual equality, yet when Prabhupāda heard that evening that he had touched off so much media response, he was amused. He was ready to tell them more.

"Why only the woman should become pregnant?" he said, reiterating his point before the small group of devotees in his room. "The man goes away, and she has to take care of the children and beg from the government. Is that independence?"

Devotee: "Then the independence has become contraception. They say, 'I do not want to have the child.' "

Prabhupāda: "That means you commit another sinful activity. You will be punished."

Devotee: "Śrīla Prabhupāda, the whole civilization, American Western civilization, is now bewildered by this theory of women's liberation."

Prabhupāda: "But how they will be liberated? On this point first of all let me know. Anyway, I am not speaking of my experience. When we speak, we speak from the śāstra. Women's dependence is described in Manu-saṁhitā. Just like Queen Kuntī—she is not an ordinary woman. She was learned and exalted."

Brahmānanda Swami: "This is one point. In our devotional line there are spiritual leaders who have been women, such as Kuntī."

Prabhupāda: "Therefore I say that Kuntī remained dependent on her sons. That is my proposition. Her sons were banished. But when they went to the forest she followed, because she thought, 'I am a widow. I am dependent on my sons. So wherever they remain, I shall remain.' Similarly Sītā, the wife of Lord Rāmacandra. Lord Rāmacandra was requested by His father to go to the forest, not Sītā. But she preferred to go with her husband. When her husband said, 'You are not banished. You stay at home,' she said, 'No. I am dependent on You. Wherever You shall go, I must go.' This is Vedic culture."

Devotee: "Her chastity was her great virtue. But nowadays that is no longer true."

Prabhupāda: "Nowadays may be different, but I am speaking the Vedic idea. That's all. In all circumstances, unless her husband is crazy or something like that—mad—in every case, the wife is faithful and subservient to the husband. Even the husband goes out of home, vānaprastha, the wife also goes with him. When he takes sannyāsa, at that time there is no accompanying of wife. Otherwise, in gr̥hastha life and even vānaprastha life, the wife is the constant companion and subservient. Gāndhārī—her husband was blind. So when the marriage settlement was done, she was not blind, but she voluntarily became blind by wrapping cloth over her eyes. There are instances in the Vedic literature. The wife remains always faithful and subservient to the husband. That is her perfection. The Americans may not like this idea, but that is a different thing."

A five-person TV crew arrived at Prabhupāda's apartment—four women and a male assistant. Obviously they were making a point. While the crew set up their lights and equipment, Prabhupāda sat serenely behind his low desk, a few of his disciples sitting before him on the floor.

The interviewer first asked Prabhupāda about his solutions to America's problems. Comparing society to the human body, Prabhupāda replied that while all parts of the body were important, the head was the most important. Without a properly functioning head, the person (or society) was mad. There was need, therefore, for training first-class men.

"Where do women fit into these four classes?" the newswoman asked. Śrīla Prabhupāda duly repeated that woman, being subordinate to man, had her position according to the position of her husband.

And so it went. The questions were challenges—"Do you think I'm inferior to you?" The interviewer was out to make Prabhupāda appear prejudiced, but he spoke only pure philosophy.

"Spiritually they are all one," Prabhupāda said. Yet he emphasized a distinction, materially, between man and woman. "For example," he said, "women can bear children, but the man cannot. Is it possible for the man to become pregnant?"

Interviewer: "What happens when women are not subordinate to men?"

Prabhupāda: "Then there is disruption, social disruption. Therefore in the Western countries there are so many divorce cases, because the woman does not agree to become subordinate to man."

Interviewer: "What advice do you have to women who do not want to become subordinate to men?"

Prabhupāda: "It is not my advice, but it is the advice of the Vedic knowledge that woman should be chaste and faithful to man."

Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to the point that women bear children but men cannot. "By nature's way," he said, "as soon as you get children you require support from the husband. Otherwise you are in difficulty."

Interviewer: "Many woman have children and have no support from their husbands. They have no husband."

Prabhupāda: "Then they have to take support from others. You cannot deny that. The government is giving you support. But the government is embarrassed. If the husband supports the wife and children, the government is relieved of so much welfare contribution. So that is a problem. Man and woman unite. The woman becomes pregnant, and the husband goes away. Then the poor woman is embarrassed with the child. She has to beg from the government. So do you think it is a very nice thing? The Vedic idea is that woman should be married to a man and the man should take charge of the woman and the children so that they do not become a burden to the government or to the public."

Interviewer: "What about women who do not have children?"

Prabhupāda: "Well, that is another unnatural thing. Sometimes they use contraceptives. They kill children—abortion. That is also not very good. These are all sinful activities. One has to suffer for them."

It was a heated interview—the feminist interviewer set on disparaging Prabhupāda for his outrageous remarks. Yet he remained strong and uncompromising, arguing in such a way as to point out many anomalies of materialistic civilization.

Prabhupāda didn't discriminate against women as a class and in fact gave women in his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement the same opportunity as men. Although the reporter misunderstood him, labeling him as a male chauvinist, actually he was compassionate. According to the Vedic view, women should be protected from exploitative men. Prabhupāda was aware that his words were not being appreciated, but he continued, hopeful that the truth would prevail and that intelligent people would understand. The important point was liberation, not temporary social or sexist stances.

After the TV crew left, Prabhupāda continued the discussion. He said that their becoming angry showed their defeat. They were unwilling to accept logic.

Prabhupāda: "This women's liberation is not successful. It has caused disaster. When the women become dependent on the welfare gift of the government, then the government has to raise taxes heavily for this purpose. If they think it is not a problem, then what can be said? By nature's way, if the husband takes care of the wife and children, this problem is solved immediately. But the man takes advantage and goes away after making the woman pregnant. And the woman is embarrassed, and the government is embarrassed."

Devotee: "And the child grows up to be a criminal."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, that is another problem. So they are not far-seeing. Therefore we have to take advice from Kṛṣṇa. We are spreading this knowledge that you take your counsel from Kṛṣṇa, then you will be happy."

Satsvarūpa: "Śrīla Prabhupāda, if we speak these things on television and the newspapers and people become angry, if all the people become angry like she just did, is it still good propaganda for us?"

Prabhupāda: "No. Then we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. But in the Bhagavad-gītā everything is discussed—varṇa-saṅkara and the first-class man, the second-class man. If you have to push on the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, then we have to discuss. But if they do not like, better to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Don't discuss anything. If you are not agreeable to hear from Bhagavad-gītā, then let us chant together Hare Kṛṣṇa—that's all. But these things are discussed in the Bhagavad-gītā. There it is said that when there is unwanted population and it is increased, then it becomes hell. So if you want to increase the hellish persons, then don't discuss. But if you think it is a problem, then discuss."

Satsvarūpa: "As brāhmaṇas we have to be truthful. In Hong Kong they asked you what you thought of that guru who says he is God. You said you could not help yourself, and you spoke out."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, I said he is a great cheat. What can I say? And now it has been proven. As I said in my book *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, this moon excursion is childish, and that has also been proven now. Now they don't talk about the moon excursion. Because they are a failure."

The next morning Śrīla Prabhupāda rode to Loyola Park for his morning walk. On the way, one of the devotees read aloud the news article from that morning's edition of the *Chicago Tribune*.

"Forgive me if this story is not well-written," the article began. "I am a woman." The article continued:

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the 77-year-old founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, said so Wednesday. The Society is dedicated to peace in the world through love of God and relinquishment of all things material. The Swami spoke seated cross-legged on an expensive-looking cushion, surrounded by fresh flowers, microphones, and burning incense in the conference room he rented at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel. He is in town for a Krishna parade at 1:30 P.M. Saturday down State Street in which he will ride on a flower-bedecked float. Then he will fly to Philadelphia for more celebration and philosophical chats. He looked occasionally at his gold watch as he explained his life philosophy. His adoring disciples, five men, knelt at his side.

The article continued, implying that Śrīla Prabhupāda was a male chauvinist. "He said women do not figure in his class system except as daughters or wives. An unmarried woman is presumably classless."

Śrīla Prabhupāda chuckled in the back seat of the car and remarked, "That is a fact. She is prostitute, that's all. If you classify, then she is prostitute. There is no other way."

The devotee continued reading.

The Swami now lives in Los Angeles, and he trains his followers there. Their income is from sales of his books, magazines, and incense. He says he has about 10,000 followers. "We do not have so many," he said. "It is hard to find a first-class man." It's a pity, half the population are women.

"So it is not bad," said Prabhupāda. And he offered his own positive proposal for women in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Our policy should be that at Dallas Gurukula we shall create first-class men. And we shall teach the girls two things: how to become chaste and faithful to their husband and how to cook nicely. If they have these two qualifications, then I will take a guarantee to get them a good husband. So try to do that."

At the park Prabhupāda was joined by several carloads of devotees. Followed closely by a dozen eager disciples, he proceeded down a path that ran among many tall shade trees along the shore of Lake Michigan. Since the walkway was wide enough for only a few devotees to walk abreast, most of the devotees fanned out onto the grass, trying to keep within hearing distance of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Ordinary education is sufficient," Prabhupāda was saying "—ABCD. This is nonsense—big, big education and then later on become a prostitute. To make them prostitute doesn't require education. So in Dallas Gurukula there is no problem. Educate the girls how to become faithful, chaste wife, how to cook nicely. Let them learn varieties of cooking. Is it very difficult? These two qualifications. There are many stories such as of Damāyāntī, Pārvatī, Sītā—great women in the history. Our girls should read their lives. And by fifteen and sixteen years they should be married. If they are qualified, it will not be difficult to find out a nice husband. If a woman is chaste, even though she is not very beautiful, she will be liked by her husband. So train them in that way."

Before starting back, Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped and suggested they all sit together on the grass. A disciple volunteered his wool cādar as a seat for Prabhupāda, and the devotees all sat down, facing their spiritual master. Special, unexpected occasions like this made them blissful, and the opinions of a TV news reporter or the Chicago Tribune seemed remote and unimportant. The devotees often wished such persons could be present at times like these to see that Śrīla Prabhupāda was not at all like they thought.

Śrīla Prabhupāda began discussing the proper relations between men and women. "Women and men should live separately," he said. "That is also essential. Butter and fire must be kept apart. Otherwise the butter will melt. You cannot stop it."

Devotee: "Śrīla Prabhupāda, in a purport in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam you say that even fifty years ago in India the householders had separate quarters in the apartment for men and women, and the husband would not see his wife during the day. Is this the standard we should develop in our movement?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, that is good. The example is that butter and fire should be kept as far apart as possible. Otherwise the butter will melt. The man is butter, and the woman is fire. So this is restricted, even if the man happens to be father, brother, or son. Mātrā svasrā duhitṛā vā. One may say that people will not think of sex impulse in the presence of a daughter, mother, or sister. But the śāstra says no, there is possibility. So they should not sit together. People may say this is only advice for the tenth-class rascal. But the next line of the śāstra says no: vidvamsam api karṣati. It is not the question of the tenth-class rascal, but even first-class, learned, he may be attracted. Balavān indriya-grāmo vidvāmsam api karṣati. The senses are so strong that they can mislead even the most learned scholar.

"Lord Brahma was attracted to his daughter. Just see, there is the example. Lord Śiva was attracted by the Mohinī-mūrti. Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "Even if I see a wooden woman, I become attracted." Prabhupāda laughed. "He is giving this information to teach us that it is possible. So, shall we go now?"

Returning in the car, Prabhupāda asked for news of Indira Gandhi and India. Some of her policies had become highly controversial, and political opposition to her was mounting. The latest news was of her emergency rule.

"If Indira Gandhi takes my advice," Prabhupāda said, "then I can keep her on the post, and she can do greater service to India. Immediately the whole public will give her support."

"What would your advice to her be?" asked Brahmānanda Swami.

"My first step," said Prabhupāda, "will be to capture all the hoarders and distribute the grains free. Immediately the public will be obliged to her. There are immense amounts of food grains, and they are simply hoarded. They are not selling without good price. This is going on. Immediately she can win the public. Some of the hoarders should be hanged, so that in the future nobody will hoard. People are hungry, and she says she has got some program to drive away the poverty. This is the

point. If she can supply all consumer goods free to the poor for the time being, then immediately the whole population will like her. And the hoarders should be exemplarily punished. Then nobody will hoard. But to remain the leader she requires spiritual knowledge, otherwise it will be another disaster. If she wants to remain leader then she must be a spiritual person. She must become a Vaiṣṇavī."

* * *

Philadelphia

July 11, 1975

Prabhupāda's receptions were usually large, spontaneous turnouts. The temple population would increase greatly just before his arrival in a city, as devotees from other centers converged. Except for a handful of disciples—the woman preparing Prabhupāda's meal, the men laying down the last tiles in his room or working on the Ratha-yatra cart—everyone would go to the airport to greet him.

At the airports Śrīla Prabhupāda was accustomed to much fanfare, the rhythmic crash of hand cymbals, the beating of mṛdaṅgas, and the chanting chorus of a hundred or more happy devotees. Only if they became wild or disruptive would he object. Otherwise, as Kṛṣṇa's representative, he would be pleased to see an enthusiastic reception, as he collected flowers and obeisances, like a viceroy accepting tribute on behalf of the king. By his grace, the praise and worship was going directly to Kṛṣṇa.

Thus in Philadelphia, as at almost every airport reception, Śrīla Prabhupāda felt satisfied. With loving glances he acknowledged the familiar faces of his spiritual sons and daughters. Devotees stepped forward to place flower garlands around his neck, and the reporters also stepped forward, with cameras, microphones, and notepads. They had not come to offer Prabhupāda devotional praise, and yet they also appeared to be serving him by offering him the opportunity to preach.

A woman reporter asked, "It has been said that the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement is what some people consider sexist or racist, because certain propensities for women and for blacks have been defined either by the devotees or the Vedic scriptures. I wonder if you would comment on that."

She had spoken rapidly, and Brahmānanda Swami repeated for Śrīla Prabhupāda, "She says you give inferior roles to women and Negroes." Prabhupāda: "We give equal roles spiritually. Materially, one man is servant, one man is master. How can you avoid this? Do you think everyone will be master, no one will be servant? Materially? Materially one is father, one is son, one is master, one is servant, one is man, one is woman. How can you stop this? But spiritually they are all equal."

Here was the same news theme that had begun in Chicago, and here came the same challenges.

Reporter: "So what is happening materially is unimportant?"

Prabhupāda: "Materially there is distinction. But when you come to the spiritual platform, then when you discern the spirit soul within everything—that is equal. Like you are differently dressed in a red shirt, and I am differently dressed. This difference must be there. There are so many men and women, and they are differently dressed. You cannot say they are all equal by the dress. But within the dress, the living entities, they are the same. We make this distinction materially, but not spiritually."

"I would like to ask one question," said another reporter. "What is it that you are offering that has resulted in such an emotional response from all the people here?"

Prabhupāda: "Because they are being spiritually educated. We are above the material platform. Therefore we have no distinction that one is American, one is Indian, one is black, one is white. There is no such distinction. Everyone is servant of God. Is that all right?"

Another reporter mentioned that there were many gurus and asked why Prabhupāda thought his teaching was the truth.

Prabhupāda: "Because we speak the truth. We don't give bluff, saying, 'I am God.' We know the actual position—that God is great and we are all servants."

The question had been asked in the typical reporters' attitude of irreverent interrogation, but Prabhupāda was replying soberly, reflecting on his own position in relation to Kṛṣṇa. "How can I say I am God?" he asked. And he lowered his head. "No, we do not give bluff. We say the real truth. Therefore it appeals. If I say something humbug, it may act for some time, but it will not endure."

Reporter: "Your celebration is tomorrow. Of what will that celebration consist?"

Prabhupāda: "Celebration? It is remembering Kṛṣṇa, or the Lord. He with His brother and sister visited Kurukṣetra, a place in India. So in memory of that visit, we observe this Ratha-yātrā."

Śrīla Prabhupāda got into the rented Cadillac limousine, along with Kīrtanānanda Swami, Brahmānanda Swami, and Ravindra Svarūpa, the Philadelphia temple president.

"So again the same question was raised," said Prabhupāda. "So reply was all right?"

"Yes," said Brahmānanda, "it was very nice."

Prabhupāda: "Materially there is distinction. You are differently dressed, I am differently dressed. But spiritually there is no distinction."

The chauffeur glanced to the back seat. "If you want any more air in the back, there is a control over there."

"We can put on the air conditioner, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Brahmānanda.

"Oh, all right," said Prabhupāda. "But sky condition is better." They opened the windows.

Prabhupāda recalled that he had been to Philadelphia twice before. In 1969 he had come from New York City with some devotees to lecture at Temple University. And back in 1965, after leaving Butler, Pennsylvania, he had come to the University of Pennsylvania for a meeting with Professor Norman Brown. Ravindra Svarūpa told how he had been a student at Temple University and had enrolled in Swami Nikhilananda's class a year after Śrīla Prabhupāda had spoken there.

Ravindra Svarūpa: "The students remembered you. They told me you had asked Swami Nikhilananda, 'So you are studying Vedānta. But what is Vedānta?' And no one knew. Then you said that veda means 'knowledge' and anta means 'end,' so Vedānta means the end of knowledge, and that is Kṛṣṇa. They had never heard that before, even though they had so many hours of courses in Vedānta."

Prabhupāda: "That is the difficulty. Those who are foolish people are taking the leading part. One who has no knowledge is taking the part of a teacher. Just like this—one does not know what is Vedānta, and he is reading Vedānta. It is a very simple truth. Veda means 'knowledge' and anta means 'end.' There must be some ultimate goal. But the modern process is that we go on unlimitedly, but we never come to the end. Is it not like that? What do you think?"

Ravindra Svarūpa: "Yes, it's a fact. No conclusion."

They passed a large junkyard filled with scrapped automobiles. "Motorcar," Prabhupāda said.

Kīrtanānanda: "That is the end of their knowledge—a pile of junk."

Prabhupāda: "Yes. Their time is spent in breaking and building, that's all. They do not inquire, 'Why breaking and building? Why not permanent?' That question does not arise. And they cannot solve it. They think this breaking and building is the nature. But we are giving information of another nature, where there is no breaking and building—permanent. But they cannot believe that there is such a thing. We are giving that information, how you can keep yourself eternal. This is the greatest gift to the human society. He wants to live eternally, but he doesn't know how to live eternally. His energy is being spoiled by the skyscraper building construction. But he is not very serious to construct his body eternal. We are speaking this in our meetings everywhere, but they have no brain to understand."

They rode around the sharply winding curves alongside the Schuylkill River. Passing Fairmont Park, the devotees pointed out to Prabhupāda that it contained a thousand acres of forest land. Prabhupāda asked Kīrtanānanda Swami how far it was to New Vrindaban, and they began talking. When Prabhupāda asked about the gr̥hasthas there, Kīrtanānanda replied, "We are developing very nice householder couples at New Vrindaban. Very good families."

"That is essential," said Prabhupāda. "The peaceful life of householders, that is required."

The ISKCON center was a converted two-story house. The temple room was packed with devotees, and others filled the hallway, straining to see Prabhupāda as he entered.

"Thank you very much for your kind reception," said Śrīla Prabhupāda from his seat in the temple room. "The press reporters were asking me that why do we make distinction between man and woman and black and white? But we make distinction not in that way." Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that the attempt to make everyone equal materially would be a failure always, just as the United Nations' attempt at unity was a failure. Bhagavad-gītā states that one with equal vision recognizes the differences between the bodies, but sees all beings as one spiritually.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued, "If we make unfair distinction between man and woman or black and white, then how in our temple are we all enjoying together? Because we are actually equal on the spiritual platform. We do not say that you are a woman, so you cannot become my disciple. Or you are black, therefore you cannot become my disciple. No, we welcome everyone. So that people may not misunderstand, you can just issue one statement that we say if you want to see everyone equally, treat everyone equally, then you have to come to the spiritual platform, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Materially it is not possible. But the aim should be one. If artificially you do not make distinction, that will not stay.

"Just like in your country, the blacks and whites, they have equal rights. But why they fight sometimes, racial fight? Because it is on a material platform. Our point is that you come to the spiritual platform and then this equality will be possible. Practically you can see. Here while you are chanting, dancing, the boy is dancing, the father is dancing, the black is dancing, the white is dancing, the young is dancing, the old is dancing. You can see practically—everyone dancing. And they are not artificially dancing like dog, but by spiritual ecstasy."

After his talk, Prabhupāda called for questions.

Ravindra Svarūpa: "What is the best way to deal with skepticism?"

Prabhupāda: "Skepticism—rascalism. [Devotees laugh] We are not going to deal with rascalism. We are going to deal with sense. Skepticism, they do not believe in anything—everything is false. They are so disappointed, they think everything is false. We are not going to deal with such men. What is the use? Is not that skepticism? What is that skepticism?"

Ravindra Svarūpa: "Disappointment, that's all."

Prabhupāda: "So why should one be disappointed? We say that you should come to the spiritual platform and you will be happy. We want to deliver him from the platform of his disappointment. Sometimes one being very disappointed commits suicide. We say, 'Why are you disappointed? You come to the spiritual platform and you will be happy.' So we are not going to accept his philosophy, skepticism, but we want to deliver him from his fallen condition. That is our mission.

"The living entity, the spirit soul, is by nature happy. There is no question of disappointment. You see Kṛṣṇa's picture anywhere. How happy they are. The gopīs are happy, the cowherd boys are happy, Kṛṣṇa is happy. Simply happiness. Where is disappointment? So you come to that platform, and then you will also be happy. Come to Kṛṣṇa, come and dance with Kṛṣṇa, eat with Kṛṣṇa. That is information we are giving. What is the question of disappointment? Come to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa

therefore personally comes to show how happy He is in Vṛndāvana. And He is inviting, "Come to Me."

Prabhupāda continued his ecstatic description of happiness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and then concluded, "Is that all right?" Many voices together answered, "Yes!" There was no disappointment or skepticism in Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to Philadelphia primarily for the Ratha-yātrā. Since 1970, the devotees had been holding Ratha-yatra in Philadelphia, although the early festivals had been small. For the first festival the devotees had taken small deities on procession on a decorated cigar box. They had placed the deities on an altar on the bank of the Schuylkill River and had held kīrtana while people picnicked and lay around in the sunshine. The next year's festival had been a little bigger, with foot-high deities riding on a palanquin. It was still not a very ambitious festival, but Śrīla Prabhupāda had written in appreciation.

I am so glad to hear how nicely you performed Rathayatra festival. Next year you can perform the regular ceremony with the cart as we are doing in San Francisco and London. That will be very nice. It doesn't matter if you construct a small one, but you can hold a festival.

Ravindra Svarūpa had become temple president just after Prabhupāda's letter had arrived, and he had resolved to have a real Ratha-yatra cart for 1972. So the devotees had done it—a small cart, but a cart, pulled in procession down to Washington Square Park. By 1973 they had made a large cart, and devotees from other cities had come to help with the festival. Again Śrīla Prabhupāda responded.

At Rathayatra there must be either one or three carts. It is very good news to hear that one television station is interested to do a special program on the Rathayatra festival. These festivals are good for showing to the people in general that Krishna consciousness is real enjoyment. Everything else is simply artificial. Your plans for Rathayatra festival are very nice.

In the summer of 1974 Ravindra Svarūpa had written to Prabhupāda about the preaching activities in Philadelphia and had sent photos of their Jagannātha Deities. Śrīla Prabhupāda had been moved by the pictures.

I want to thank you a hundred times for the excellent way you are worshiping the Deity there as I can see from the color photographs you have sent. From my childhood I was also worshiping Lord Jagannath. When I was six years old my father gave me a ratha and I was performing the Rathayatra in my neighborhood. Now in the Western world you are worshiping Lord Jagannath so gorgeously and it pleases me very much. Thank you again for the way you are conducting the deity worship in the Philadelphia temple. As for the Rathayatra ceremony, you should go on with it, and I shall attend there next year. But you go on holding a splendid ceremony for the people of the city. I am sure that it will be a success.

In 1975 Śrīla Prabhupāda had written from Denver, assuring the Philadelphia devotees, "Yes, I am coming to your city on Friday morning, July 11, 1975, from Chicago. I look forward to meeting the

professors." Therefore, when the devotees in Chicago had tried to convince Prabhupāda to stay and attend their festival, scheduled at the same time as Philadelphia's, he had declined.

Shortly after Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival it began to rain, all day Friday and all day Saturday. When time came for Prabhupāda's morning walk and rain was still pouring, he said, "So today I will take my walk by riding." Getting into his car along with some of his sannyāsīs and G.B.C. men, he set off in the rain for a ride through Fairmont Park. The rain continued on Saturday right up until the time for the Ratha-yātrā parade.

The parade was to start at Independence Mall, head down Walnut Street to Broad, circle City Hall, and end on the grassy slope behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Prabhupāda rode into the city, where he was to meet the Ratha-yātrā cart halfway through the procession. The rain had stopped, but dark clouds still hung ominously overhead.

Majestically the large forty-foot-high cart moved down Walnut Street. By the time it reached Eleventh Street, Śrīla Prabhupāda had gotten out of his car two blocks away and was walking toward Lord Jagannātha. A large group of devotees surrounded Prabhupāda, and the devotees on the cart could see him approaching. The two groups joined, and the kīrtana swelled. Standing before the cart now, Śrīla Prabhupāda got down on his hands and knees and touched his head to the road in obeisance to Lord Jagannātha.

This cart was the best yet, Prabhupāda said. He especially liked the large, strong wheels, ornately decorated with small round and diamond-shaped mirrors. Mounting the cart, he took his seat beneath the Deities, and for the first time in days, the clouds parted and the sun shone through.

Now people started pouring out of offices and stores. They lined the sidewalks and came out into the road to join the procession. As the cart circled City Hall, the sound of the devotees' singing became magnified, echoing off the tall buildings. The crowd was the largest ever at any Philadelphia Ratha-yatra.

Hecklers—Christian fundamentalists with big banners reading "Get smart, get saved!" and "Repent or burn!"—were ineffectual amid the large crowd and the uproarious kīrtana. At one point, when Śrīla Prabhu pāda appeared particularly satisfied, a devotee on the cart leaned over and asked Śrīla Prabhupāda what he thought of the festival. Prabhupāda replied that he was thinking the American Vaiṣṇavas were now permanently in the West.

The park behind the art museum was crowded with people waiting. Śrīla Prabhupāda took his seat onstage and began lecturing over the public address system: "Ladies and gentlemen, first of all I wish to thank you, the inhabitants of this great city, Philadelphia. You are so kind and enthusiastic in taking part in this movement. So I am very much obliged to you. I am especially obliged to the American boys and girls who are helping me so much in spreading this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in the Western countries."

Prabhupāda explained how all living entities are eternal but, having taken material bodies, are subject to the tribulations of birth, death, disease, and old age. In the human form, the soul can choose to go back to the spiritual world or to suffer birth after birth in the material world. "But why

should we remain in this material body and undergo repetition, change of body?" Prabhupāda asked. "Let us have our original, spiritual body. That is wanted. That is intelligent."

Prabhupāda explained the science of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and invited everyone to try it. "We don't charge anything for this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra," he said. "We are chanting everywhere, as you saw in this Ratha-yatra. Our only means is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. And these thousands of men are following, simply by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. So you can understand what is the potency of this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. We did not pay you ladies and gentlemen anything to follow us, but we simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. So it is very potent. You will never feel tired chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. You see practically. You can go on chanting twenty-four hours, you will never feel tired. Therefore it is said, *golokera prema-dhana*. This chanting vibration is coming from the spiritual world."

Śrīla Prabhupāda talked about the inner meaning of Ratha-yatra: Rādhārāṇī's meeting Kṛṣṇa at Kurukṣetra and trying to bring Him back to Vṛndāvana. "It is a very ecstatic feeling," he said. "Those who are advanced devotees, they can enjoy." Concluding his address, he invited everyone to look at the Kṛṣṇa conscious literature and try to understand.

The devotees had prepared twelve hundred pounds of halavā and large quantities of vegetables, sweets, and fruit punch, which they very efficiently served to the crowd. Prabhupāda was satisfied with everything and returned to his house, while the devotees continued until sunset, feasting, chanting, and hosting thousands of festival-goers.

The day after Ratha-yātrā, Śrīla Prabhupāda met with a roomful of people, including two reporters and several parents of his disciples. The reporters were Ms. Sandy Nixon, a freelance writer, and from the Philadelphia Inquirer Ms. Jones, the same woman who had spoken with Śrīla Prabhupāda at the airport. Seeing japa beads around Ms. Nixon's neck, Prabhupāda said, "She is a devotee. She was chanting."

Ms. Nixon said she was writing a book on the popular gurus and had about fifteen questions to ask Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I am going to ask you questions," she said, "and most of the time I might be able to answer them myself." Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed to like her, if only because she wore the japa beads, but some of the devotees flinched at her remark about already knowing the answers to the questions she was about to ask.

"How did Kṛṣṇa consciousness develop?" Ms. Nixon asked.

"Kṛṣṇa consciousness is already there in everyone's core of heart," replied Śrīla Prabhupāda. "You have seen how during the whole procession they were chanting and dancing in ecstasy. So do you think that is artificial? No. Artificially nobody can chant and dance for hours together. That means the awakening of Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Śrīla Prabhupāda patiently and carefully answered each question—about Christ, about gurus, about the daily lives of the devotees. While discussing the evils of a godless society, he mentioned the slaughter of cows. "It is an innocent animal," he said. "It is simply eating grass given by God and supplying milk. And from milk we can live. And the gratefulness is—cut her throat. Is that civilization? What do you say?"

"I agree a hundred percent," Ms. Nixon replied. "I want you to say these things instead of me. I am asking the questions for others, of course, who do not understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Again, the devotees flinched. That Prabhupāda did not always respond to a person's attitude or nuance did not mean that he was imperceptive. He sometimes chose not to relate to a certain idiom or react to a certain foolishness, like Ms. Nixon's claims to be an expert on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And often he simply ignored a person's trivial conversation or mundane philosophy. But he was always in touch with whomever he talked to, addressing that person's true self-interest. He knew Ms. Nixon didn't know the answers to the questions she asked, and he understood that she was, despite her temporarily donned japa beads, not inquiring as a submissive disciple. Nevertheless, he was compassionate, answering to enlighten both her and her readers.

Ms. Nixon plunged onward. "How do you feel about women's lib?"

Prabhupāda remained silent, and a devotee repeated, "She wants to know about the women's liberation. What is your feeling about women's liberation?"

"That I don't want to discuss," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "because..." Śrīla Prabhupāda's serious expression slowly changed to a smile, and then he laughed. Everyone laughed. His Chicago remarks were famous. On the one hand, he didn't want to start another controversy; but he did want to clear up the issue.

He continued, "As you have asked, so I may explain how the foolish women are being cheated by the intelligent men. In your country they have given you liberty. Liberty means equal rights. Is it not? Man and woman have equal rights."

Ms. Nixon: "They are trying in this country."

Prabhupāda: "All right, trying. But you women, you cannot see that this so-called equal rights means cheating the women. Now I say more clearly that a woman and man meet, now they become lovers, then they have sex, and the woman becomes pregnant, and the man goes away. The simple woman, she has to take charge of the child and beg for government alms, 'Please give me money.' This is your independence. So you admit this is independence? Or she tries to kill the child. Do you think it is very good independence? What is your answer?" Śrīla Prabhupāda looked challengingly at both women. They had asked their questions, now he was asking.

Ms. Jones: "What is my answer to whether or not I was going to kill a child? Is that the question?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, they are killing now, abortion."

Ms. Jones: "Well, she has made the choice."

Prabhupāda: "You have made your choice to kill your child. Is that a very good choice?"

Ms. Nixon: "It's the worst crime you could make."

Śrīla Prabhupāda (to Ms. Jones): "Do you think it is very good business?"

Ms. Jones: "I think it is a very complicated question."

Prabhupāda: "Therefore I say they are cheating you in the name of independence. That you do not understand. They are cheating you, and you are thinking you are independent."

Ms. Nixon: "They forget the responsibility that comes with freedom."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, they [the men] do not take the responsibility. They go away. They enjoy and go away. And the woman has to take the responsibility. Either kill the child or maintain begging. Do you think begging is very good? In India, although they are poverty-stricken, still they do not become independent. They remain under the care of the husband, and he takes all responsibility. She has neither to kill the child nor to beg for maintaining the child.

"So which is independence? To maintain under a husband is independence, or to become free to be enjoyed by everyone? There is no freedom, but still they think they have freedom. That means under some plea the men are cheating the women, that's all. So in the name of independence they have agreed to be cheated by another class. That is the situation."

Prabhupāda explained that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement had the highest regard for women. "But to protect them from this exploitation by man," he said, "we teach that you do like this, you do like that. You be married, be settled up. Don't wander independently. We teach them like that. But so far Kṛṣṇa consciousness is concerned, we equally distribute. There is no such thing that 'Oh, you are a woman, less intelligent or more intelligent, therefore you cannot come.' We don't say that. We welcome woman, man, poor, rich—everyone. Because on that platform there is equality. That is equality."

Next Ms. Jones began to question. Ever since Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in Chicago, she had been noting what she thought was Prabhupāda's excessive material opulence.

"You have said that you are very small," she began, "and that you are not God. Yet it appears to me, as an outsider, that the devotees treat you as if you were God."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, that is devotees' duty. Just like a government officer. Personally he is not very important, but so long as he executes the government order, he should be respected as the government. That is the way. Even if an ordinary policeman comes, you have to respect him—because he is government man. But that does not mean he is respected. If that man thinks, 'I have become government. People are respecting me,' then he is foolish. But the etiquette is that when the government man comes, you should give him respect as the government."

Ms. Jones: "I wonder about the many beautiful material things that the devotees bring to you. For instance, when you left the airport you left in a big, beautiful, fancy car. I wonder about this."

Prabhupāda: "That is teaching them how to respect. If you respect a government man as government, then you must treat him like that. If you respect the spiritual master as God, then you must offer him the facilities of God. Otherwise, how should he treat me as God, simply in his mind? No. In action also."

Ms. Jones: "I am sorry, what was that you said?"

Prabhupāda: "If the spiritual master is treated as God, so the devotee must practically show how he is treating him as God. God travels by a golden car, so if the spiritual master is offered an ordinary motorcar, still it is not sufficient, because he has to be treated like God. What is this motorcar for God?"

The devotees laughed at Prabhupāda's bold logic. They had never thought of it quite like that: If the guru is God's representative, then why quibble if he is offered a mere Cadillac of this material world?

Prabhupāda: "They are still deficient. If God comes to your home, will you bring Him an ordinary motorcar, or would you arrange for a golden car? So your point is that they offer me a nice motorcar, but I say it is not sufficient. They are still lacking to treat him as God. Be practical."

Ms. Jones didn't think it was funny. She had another question. Her questions became more challenging. Prabhupāda explained to her how she must have spiritual vision to see things in their proper perspective. "But if you have no eyes—therefore you are envious because they have offered me a nice motorcar. So you have to make your eyes to see. A blind man cannot see. The eyes are to be treated, how to see."

Ms. Jones had one more question. One of the most difficult things to understand in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, she said, was the Deities. How could someone brought up in the West accept that the Deities represented God?

Śrīla Prabhupāda first explained that the spiritual soul within the body was the real self. "Therefore," he said, "as you cannot see the spirit, so you cannot see the Supreme Spirit, or God. But to show His kindness upon you He has appeared just like wood and stone, so that you can see."

The two reporters were finished with their questions, and they thanked Prabhupāda, who then turned his attention to others in the room. When a father of one of the devotees mentioned that he himself professed no religion, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied indirectly that the father was therefore a fool. The man admitted it. The mother, however, was more spiritually inclined, and Prabhupāda praised her, stating that the son takes on the traits of the mother.

Another guest spoke. "I would like to ask, Swami, would you pray for me?"

"I am praying for everyone," Prabhupāda replied softly. "That is my business. Otherwise, why have I come here?"

A woman addressed Prabhupāda: "As a mother, I too wish to thank you. My daughter Joy has found Kṛṣṇa consciousness. She has been recommended for initiation tomorrow."

Prabhupāda: "So we recommend everyone. Every American should be initiated. That is our recommendation. The sooner you accept this proposal, it is good for you. To know God and love Him. Is there any difficulty? Some have become interested, why not others?"

Prabhupāda again glanced at the father who claimed to have no religion. "Your son is interested," he said. "Why the father is not interested? What is the reason?"

Thus the evening darśana continued, until after a few hours Prabhupāda ended it and distributed prasādam.

When the last guest had left, several of the women devotees asked Prabhupāda about the actual position of his women disciples. He smiled. "When a woman becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious," he said, "her brain is automatically bigger." The devotees laughed.

As he smiled, his devotees understood him perfectly: whoever became a devotee, man or woman, became more intelligent. Being transcendental to the issue of men's or women's rights, Prabhupāda saw beyond the designation of the body. He saw that the criterion for intelligence wasn't material—one's sex, race, or nationality—but was one's desire for spiritual life.

A woman devotee asked Prabhupāda a further question about the position of women, and he replied, "Of course you are not a woman. You are a devotee."

Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed to see several professors—acquaintances of Ravindra Svarūpa's. Having received his B.A. in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania and his M.A. from Temple University, Ravindra Svarūpa was now pursuing a Ph.D. from Temple. He had once given up academics as part of the world of māyā and had fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but Prabhupāda had encouraged him to return for a further degree.

While in Philadelphia Śrīla Prabhupāda had spoken out against the process of inductive reasoning. On one morning walk Ravindra Svarūpa had said, "Prabhupāda, the same criticism that you just made of induction was also made by John Stewart Mill and Bertrand Russell, but they became skeptics. They say, therefore, there is no knowledge at all."

"That is another nonsense," Śrīla Prabhupāda had replied. "That is also speculation—"Because I have failed, therefore there is no knowledge.' "

Dr. Yogesh Patel, a Western-educated, Indian-born scholar of Buddhism and Māyāvāda Hinduism, taught in the religion department at Temple University. Accompanied by two graduate students, Dr. Patel dropped by one afternoon while Śrīla Prabhupāda was talking in his room with several of his disciples. Ravindra Svarūpa made the introductions.

Prabhupāda: "So you are teaching Hinduism?"

Dr. Patel: "Yes."

Prabhupāda: "What is that Hinduism?"

Dr. Patel: "I don't know. You tell me what Hinduism is."

Prabhupāda: "You don't know? You are teaching Hinduism but you don't know what it is? This is our Dr. Svarūpa Dāmodara. He is also a Ph.D. Let us get his opinion on this. [Turning to Svarūpa Dāmodara.] What do you think of that? He is teaching, but he does not know."

Svarūpa Dāmodara: "Cheater, Śrīla Prabhupāda. That is called cheater."

Prabhupāda: "So you have heard his judgment that you are a cheater?" Dr. Patel became angry and raised his voice at Śrīla Prabhupāda. The professor and Śrīla Prabhupāda were immediately into a battle.

Dr. Patel: "You teach me! If I say I don't know what is religion, then you teach me."

Prabhupāda: "A spiritual master is not your servant. First you become shaven-headed like my students, then I will teach you. You have to offer your obeisances and surrender to the spiritual master. Then he will reveal the truth."

Dr. Patel replied that he did offer his obeisances to Prabhupāda when he first entered the room.

Prabhupāda: "Then my first instruction to you is to stop this cheating." By now both Śrīla Prabhupāda and Dr. Patel were speaking with raised voices. Most of the devotees were shocked speechless. Some of them, like Brahmānanda Swami, felt compelled to somehow end the meeting.

Prabhupāda: "You ask me what is religion. My reply is, sarva-dharmān parityajya. Kṛṣṇa says religion means śaraṇam vraja—fully surrender."

Dr. Patel: "What do you mean by surrender?"

Prabhupāda: "You don't know the meaning of surrender? Give me a dictionary. Let us see."

Dr. Patel (yelling): "No! I want the Sanskrit etymological meaning of surrender!"

Prabhupāda: "You don't want a spiritual master. You want a Sanskrit teacher. We cannot waste our time any more." Brahmānanda Swami saw this as his cue. He leaned over to Dr. Patel and asked him to leave, "before you get offensive." Dr. Patel and Brahmānanda Swami then rose and left the room together.

Śrīla Prabhupāda remained shaking with anger. The senior devotees looked over at Ravīndra Svarūpa reproachfully. How could he bring such a man to see Prabhupāda? Ravīndra Svarūpa was appalled and frightened. Never before had anyone seen Prabhupāda explode with such anger.

After staying up all night, Ravindra Svarūpa approached Prabhupāda the next morning with a prepared apology. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," he began, "I am really sorry that I brought that professor to see you last night. I had no idea he was such a rascal."

Śrīla Prabhupāda looked up in surprise. "Oh," he said, "that is all right." He paused, and then added with quiet satisfaction, "At least he was chastised."

Dr. Thomas Hopkins, another teacher of Hinduism, came to see Prabhupāda, but in a much different mood. From the beginning they experienced an immediate rapport. Dr. Hopkins asked Prabhupāda the relationship of Bhagavad-gītā to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and Prabhupāda replied that the Bhāgavatam was like the graduate study of the Gītā, beginning where the Gītā left off.

Dr. Hopkins: "If someone was going to collect a very small section of your work, say one or two verses, what would you want them to collect?"

"That is stated in two verses," Prabhupāda replied. "Dharmasya hy āpavargasya..." And he had the translation read: "All occupational engagements, dharmas, are certainly meant for ultimate liberation. They should never be performed for material gain. Furthermore, one who is engaged in the ultimate occupational service, dharma, should never use material gain to cultivate sense gratification."

Prabhupāda had the purport read, and he expanded on it further, explaining how people are only after material gain, neglecting the real purpose of life.

Dr. Hopkins: "Do you think, then, that this message is the most important message that you have to convey?"

Prabhupāda: "That is the most important message, because you are not this material body. Suppose you have got this shirt. So if you simply try to maintain this shirt, is that a very good intelligence? Without taking care of your person? Similarly, we are spirit soul, and the body is just like dress. So in the whole material world everyone is engaged to take care of the body. Nobody knows what is spirit soul, what is his need."

Dr. Hopkins seemed pleased to hear such a broad explanation of Vaiṣṇavism. When he asked about Śiva, Prabhupāda explained that although Lord Śiva should not be considered equal to Lord Viṣṇu, he was the best Vaiṣṇava, the chief devotee of Viṣṇu, and he could be worshiped as such.

And Lord Rāma?

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that Rāma was an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. Professor Hopkins was pleased to hear this. Prabhupāda explained that Madhva, Rāmānuja, and Viṣṇu Svami were all "big, big ācāryas." Dr. Hopkins then asked about Tukarāma, the saint of Mahārāṣṭra.

Prabhupāda: "Yes, Tukarāma accepted Viṣṇu as Supreme. He accepted the process of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, saṅkīrtan. And he accepted Caitanya Mahāprabhu as his guru. So there is no difference between Tukarāma and Caitanya."

Dr. Hopkins: "So Lord Viṭṭhala and Kṛṣṇa are the same?"

Prabhupāda: "Lord Viṭṭhala is Viṣṇu."

Dr. Hopkins: "And the Alvars of Tamil Nadu, Ādivāsī—you accept their teachings also? So the real question is between Vaiṣṇava and others."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, that is the question—Vaiṣṇava and non-Vaiṣṇava. The actual difference is personalist and impersonalist."

Dr. Hopkins: "You would see the worshipers of Śiva as impersonalists?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, impersonalists. Śaṅkarācārya said that ultimately the Absolute Truth is impersonal, and one can imagine a personal form for the benefit of the worshiper."

When Dr. Hopkins pointed out that some of the Śiva worshipers seemed to be personalists, Prabhupāda explained the real mentality of the Śaivites, according to Śaṅkara. "'Now I am a devotee,'" said Prabhupāda, " 'but as soon as I become perfect, I become One.' That is their theory. 'In the preliminary state, when I am not perfect, I am worshiping some imaginary form of God. But when I become perfect, there is no need of worshiping. I become One.' "

As a scholar, Dr. Hopkins was visibly pleased to hear the authentic philosophy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. When Prabhupāda mentioned the smārta-brāhmaṇas as also being impersonalists, Dr. Hopkins was surprised.

"It would be very difficult to pick them out," said Prabhupāda. "Most of the so-called Vaiṣṇavas are impersonalists."

Dr. Hopkins: "So the deciding test as to whether one is a serious devotee or not is not only whether one is devoted now, but that he sees the goal as perpetual devotion."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, he is nitya-yukta. That means perpetually."

Dr. Hopkins, considering this criterion, inquired about the position of Śrī Aurobindo, who seemed to be beyond impersonalism. Prabhupāda agreed.

"He says that above the Māyāvāda philosophy there is something else," Prabhupāda explained. "That is bhakti. But Aurobindo could not understand, because he did not take education from realized persons. He wanted to realize by himself."

Dr. Hopkins: "So his problem was the effort to do this on his own?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes. He did not go through the guru-paramparā. Therefore it will take a long time."

Dr. Hopkins finally had to leave and thanked Prabhupāda for his time and wisdom. "Why don't you join us also?" asked Prabhupāda. "The whole human society should join us." Dr. Hopkins replied that he had been a friend of the devotees for many years and suspected that in the end he might end up as a sannyāsī. Prabhupāda pointed out that sannyāsa didn't mean a change of dress but rather giving everything to Kṛṣṇa.

* * *

July 15, 1975

Śrīla Prabhupāda had a direct flight from Philadelphia to San Francisco. He and Upendra sat in the first-class section, while Brahmānanda Swami, Harikeśa, and Pradyumna traveled economy class. Viśākhā-devī dāśī had also come, to photograph Śrīla Prabhupāda.

After the plane had reached cruising altitude, a uniformed gentleman emerged from the cabin. Immediately he caught sight of Śrīla Prabhupāda sitting by the window and walked over. When he leaned over and asked Prabhupāda how he was, Prabhupāda saw that the man wanted to talk, so he asked Upendra to get up and give the gentleman his seat.

"You are the captain?" Prabhupāda surmised.

"No," the man replied. "I am a flight supervisor, come to overlook the pilot and the crew. Would it be all right if I asked you a philosophical question?"

Prabhupāda nodded, apparently pleased.

"Is everything created by God?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda said yes and quoted the Vedānta-sūtra: *janmādy asya yataḥ*. Everything in existence, Prabhupāda said, has its origin in God.

"Then what is evil?" the flight supervisor asked. "Is evil also God's creation?"

"For God there is not good or evil," Prabhupāda explained. "Everything is good. Goodness is God's frontage, and evil is God's back portion. Taking this example, the chest or the back of the body are equal. It is not that when there is some pain in the back side I don't care for it, I simply take care of it when there is pain in the chest. No. Although it is the back side, it is as important as the front side.

"So evil and good are also of the same importance? No. For God there is nothing evil. Just like for the sun there is no darkness. But for us there is light and darkness. If you keep your back to the sun, you will find darkness. And if you face the sun, then there is no darkness.

"We create darkness as soon as we change our position. If instead of remaining in front of God I keep God on the back, then there is darkness. Otherwise, there is no question of darkness. But in the sun as it is, there is no such darkness. Therefore God is all-good. But for us, when we forget

God, that is evil. And when we are in God consciousness always, then everything is good. Is that all right?"

The man seemed to understand and respectfully accepted the answer. He was about to ask another question when a well-dressed but somewhat drunken passenger came up to them and spoke. Śrīla Prabhupāda looked up at the man and asked, "Are you afraid of death?" The intoxicated man stammered, sobered, and walked away.

The flight supervisor inquired again, taking his meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda as a rare opportunity. "Can you tell me how one can become peaceful?" he asked.

Śrīla Prabhupāda began quoting Bhagavad-gītā, *bhoktāraṁ yajña tapasām...*, and, signaling Viśākhā, asked for a copy of the Gītā. The devotees quickly consulted, but no one had a Bhagavad-gītā.

When Prabhupāda heard this he became angry, although containing his feelings in the presence of his guest. He then explained to the man that one had to have knowledge of God as the supreme controller, the supreme enjoyer, and the best friend of everyone; only then could one have peace. "Out of foolishness," Prabhupāda said, "we are claiming the land is our property. Therefore there is no peace. But actually, God is the proprietor."

Both Śrīla Prabhupāda and the flight supervisor enjoyed their talk, and as the flight supervisor excused himself, he heartily shook Prabhupāda's hand.

Prabhupāda called for Pradyumna. His eyes glowing in transcendental anger, he reprimanded Upendra and Pradyumna for not having a copy of Bhagavad-gītā; they should have one with them at all times. Pradyumna offered that although he didn't have Prabhupāda's Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, he just happened to be carrying an edition by another author. This infuriated Prabhupāda even more. He then ordered Upendra never to travel again without carrying three books: Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, and the first volume of Caitanya-caritāmṛta and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Berkeley

July 15, 1975

Within less than two weeks Prabhupāda had traveled from west coast to east coast and back. This was his first visit to ISKCON Berkeley's recently acquired headquarters, a large church complex, and as usual, hundreds of devotees from many Western centers had converged to meet him.

His arrival address specifically dealt with the position of the guru. Only unto one with unflinching faith in Kṛṣṇa and guru, he explained, is the essence of Vedic wisdom revealed. "Outsiders may think that the guru is very puffed up," said Prabhupāda, "and he is sitting and taking respect from the disciple. But the fact is that they are to be taught like that, how to offer respect to the spiritual master."

Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly encountered this misunderstanding. A year ago in Paris he had been heckled by radical students who envied his sitting on an elevated seat. And in America the reporters often portrayed him as enjoying material comforts provided by his disciples. But Prabhupāda maintained that despite a plethora of charlatans bringing disrepute to the word guru, anyone sincerely desiring to learn transcendental science had to go to a bona fide guru, the representative of God.

"A guru's business," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "is to protect the subordinate disciples from falldown. Just like I am traveling all over the world, twice, thrice in a year. My duty is to see that my disciples, who have accepted me as guru, may not fall down. That is my anxiety.

"Now how can one become guru and representative of Kṛṣṇa? Everyone will say, 'I am representative of Kṛṣṇa. I am guru.' No. The real thing is enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who says, *āmāra ājñāya guru ha...ā tāra ei deśa*: 'You just become guru on My order.' So guru means he who is carrying out the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—not self-made guru."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that sometimes people gave him much credit for having done a wonderful thing for the whole world. "But," he confessed, "I do not know that I am a wonderful man. But I know one thing: that I am speaking what Kṛṣṇa has spoken—that's all. I am not making any addition or alteration. I am presenting Bhagavad-gītā as it is. This credit I can take."

Prabhupāda continued to stress that the guru must repeat the message of Kṛṣṇa. If a so-called guru wanted to be a cheater, that was a different thing. There would always be cheaters and people who wanted to be cheated. Usually such "gurus" cheated by accepting disciples without ordering them to stop sinful acts. "If I say that you can do all nonsense," Prabhupāda said, "simply take this mantra and give me \$125, they will like. So I would have collected millions of dollars if I would have cheated like that. But I do not want that. I want one student who follows my instructions. I don't want millions. *Ekaś candras tamo hanti na ca tāraḥ sahasraśaḥ*. If there is one moon in the sky, that is sufficient for illumination. There is no need of millions of stars. My position is that I want to see that at least one disciple has become a pure devotee. Of course, I have got many sincere and pure devotees. That is my good luck. But I would have been satisfied if I could find out only one. There is no need of millions of stars."

Due to zoning restrictions, the devotees were not allowed to use the Berkeley temple as a residence. But since no suitable rooms were immediately available in the neighborhood, the devotees decided to accommodate Śrīla Prabhupāda and his personal staff in the temple for the few days of his visit, hoping the authorities wouldn't find out.

But on the first night, at two A.M., the police came by to check. Śrīla Prabhupāda was already up, working at his Bhāgavatam translation, when the police knocked loudly on the outside door near his room. Young Mike, who was to receive initiation in a few days, had been posted as a guard. He opened the door, and three flashlights shone into his face. The officers entered and showed their credentials. "You're not supposed to be sleeping in here," one of them said roughly.

"I wasn't," said Mike.

"Come on, we saw you in your sleeping bag."

"No," Mike protested. "I was just lying there because I'm guarding my spiritual master."

Śrīla Prabhupāda could easily hear the disturbance just outside his room. Other devotees who were spending the night in the building with Prabhupāda came out of their rooms and tried reasoning with the officers about the special occasion of the spiritual master's visit. One of the policemen began roaming around, checking in corners with his flashlight, opening doors. Now all the devotees in the building, about half a dozen, were standing with the policemen in the hall outside Prabhupāda's room.

"Where's the old man?" one of the policemen asked.

Bahulāśva, the temple president, requested them not to disturb Śrīla Prabhupāda. But the policemen made no attempt at politeness; they were, in fact, overtly nasty. One policeman banged on the window to Prabhupāda's room.

"Don't disturb him," Bahulāśva requested. "He's a very elderly man. He's not sleeping. These are the hours in which he writes, and all these men are his personal entourage. They're staying here to help him. We are not violating the rules."

Suddenly one of the policemen opened Prabhupāda's door and shone his light in on Prabhupāda's face. All three policemen peered in, while Śrīla Prabhupāda looked up at them, concerned, yet detached. The policeman shone his flashlight into the corners of Prabhupāda's simple, dimly lit room. No one said anything, and after about ten seconds they shut the door.

The police officers and the devotees continued arguing, the devotees contending that they were not using the building as a residence, the police citing infractions and taking down notes. Warning that they would be back, they finally left.

The incident had constituted about a half-hour interruption of Prabhupāda's work. But as the building became quiet again, Prabhupāda continued translating the verses of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and speaking his purports into the dictating machine.

Prabhupāda agreed to hold a press conference. He welcomed regular opportunities to address the press, because even though their stories were often negative or dwelt on controversies, whatever truth the paper printed generally outweighed the damaging reports. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa always appeared, and usually there would be mention of Prabhupāda's preaching or of Bhagavad-gītā. Personal details about Prabhupāda were generally not offensive. He no longer expected the press to print much of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy, although occasionally some philosophy appeared. He would often request reporters to please report accurately and not misrepresent or skip over what he had said.

The reporters, however, seemed to have a fascination for the trivial. In 1968, a reporter in Montreal had dwelt on Prabhupāda's casual shoes—"Hush-Puppied High Priest." Nevertheless, for Prabhupāda, press interviews and press conferences were a way of preaching.

The press conference was held in the temple and was attended by about a dozen reporters and photographers. Brahmānanda Swami had the reporters write their questions on a piece of paper, so that one of the devotees could read them to Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda asked the photographers not to take pictures during the conference, since it would divert people's attention.

Devotee: "Śrīla Prabhupāda, would you comment on opposition to the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in this country?"

Prabhupāda: "Why should they oppose? What is the reason? If they are Christian or Jewish religious men, so we are advocating you chant the holy name of God. So why should there be objection? Is there any reason for such objection? What is the objection?"

Devotee: "Some of the objections are that the followers of the Hare Kṛṣṇa sect are on the streets or in the airports bothering people."

Prabhupāda: "The airport itself is a botheration. So much sound, so much accident. So why this little botheration they cannot tolerate? That means intolerance. It is full of botheration, and because we are chanting they are very much disturbed. We don't chant in the airport, but we ask people that, 'Here is a very good book—you will benefit. If you like, you can take.' So what is the wrong there? Tell me, what is the wrong? If I give you something very nice, is that wrong? You read any book—we have got fifty books—and you find out any fault in that. If we are distributing some bad literature which is against the social welfare, then you can object. But you see. Bring all our books here and you will see. Any page you open you will find something good. Why are you denying to distribute such literature for the benefit of the people in general? What is the wrong there?"

Devotee: "One of the things that people say is that the devotees are asking for donations, not just distributing books but asking for money. That's a bother."

Prabhupāda: "But he pays. If he feels botheration, why does he pay? One who feels botheration does not pay. But one who thinks that here is a nice book, then he says, 'All right, let me take it.' Why you take this botheration? If it is botheration, how they are purchasing? They are paying their money, hard-earned money. Do you think they are bothered and at the same time they pay?"

Prabhupāda's sensible remark made the reporters laugh. Now they began questioning him directly.

Reporter: "What will happen to the movement in the United States when you die?"

Prabhupāda: "I will never die."

Devotees: "Jaya! Haribol!"

Prabhupāda: "I shall live from my books, and you will utilize."

Reporter: "Why does the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement not engage in social protest?"

Prabhupāda: “We are the best social workers. People are fools and rascals, and we are teaching them nice idea of God consciousness. We are the best social workers. We will stop all crimes. What is your social work? Producing hippies and criminals—that is not social work. Social work means the population must be very peaceful, wise, intelligent, and God conscious—first-class men. That is social work. If you produce some fourth-class, fifth-class, tenth-class of men, what is social work? We are not producing that. Just see, here is a first-class man. They do not have any bad habit—illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating, and gambling. They are all young men. They are not addicted to all these things. This is social work.”

When a reporter asked about the political effects of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, Prabhupāda said, “If this God consciousness is spread, then everyone will be brilliantly qualified.” Recalling a discussion from his morning walk on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, he added, “The students are studying psychology, but the result is that they are falling down from the tower in disappointment. And they have protected with glass.”

Bahulāśva explained further what Prabhupāda meant: “In the bell tower on the Berkeley campus, students in the sixties would jump from that tower to kill themselves. So they put glass there to stop the students from jumping. So Prabhupāda was explaining that this is their education, that after getting their education they have to commit suicide.”

Brahmānanda: “Śrīla Prabhupāda, one press man wanted to know what is this Ratha-yatra festival. Why is it going on over here in the Western world?”

Prabhupāda: “If God is the proprietor of everything, He is also the proprietor of the Western world. Is there any dispute? If you say God is the proprietor of the Western world, what is wrong there? So if the Western world has forgotten God, and He comes to remind them, what is the wrong?”

Reporter: “But what is the purpose of the large carts and other things you use?”

Prabhupāda: “Large cart means God is very great. He requires very great car. [The devotees laugh.] Why should He go in a small car?”

Prabhupāda continued speaking until all questions were answered. Now whatever the reporters would write was up to them, but Prabhupāda had used the occasion for glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa and explaining His movement. Whether press conference, public festival, private conversation, or translating, his purpose was the same.

During a morning walk on the Berkeley campus, Prabhupāda pronounced that nuclear war was inevitable. Devotees had brought up the topic of proliferation of atomic weapons: “Russia has so many weapons, China has so many weapons, the United States has so much...”

Prabhupāda: “Everyone now. India also.”

Devotee: “They are all afraid of using them.”

Prabhupāda: "They must use it. That is nature's arrangement. [Chuckling.] That you all die—that is nature's arrangement."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami: "When someone gets some power, he wants to try it out. Just like there was that demon, Lord Śiva gave him power so that anyone's head he touched would fall off."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, just like in your country there are so many cars, so that a poor man like me has car always—not an inch move on leg. But because there are so many cars, naturally they must be used. Similarly, there are so many weapons now that must be used. That is the natural sequence. They must use it."

Bahulāśva: "That is why they have wars, just to use up the weapons."

Prabhupāda: "Oh, yes."

Devotee: "The only difficulty is that for one person to use the atomic weapon, that means it would be the entire waste of mankind. So everyone is afraid of using the ultimate."

Prabhupāda: "Anyway, they must be used. There's no doubt about it. Therefore we can say there will be war. This is no astrology. It is a natural conclusion."

Devotee: "That will be total destruction."

Prabhupāda: "Well, total or partial, that we shall see. But they must be used."

Devotee: "Under the threat of nuclear war, wouldn't Kṛṣṇa consciousness be more easy to spread?"

Prabhupāda: "No. Threat is already there. But they are such fools that they are not afraid of the threat. Threat is already there. Everyone will die—that is the problem. But who is caring for this? They are avoiding this. They cannot take any antimeasures."

Yadubara: "So it will take a war to bring them to their senses a bit?"

Prabhupāda: "No, war is already going on. But they are so senseless that they will not come to this. They are so rascal. Therefore they are described as mūḍha—all rascals."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "It is very hard to preach to these fools, Prabhupāda."

Prabhupāda: "No, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That will be sufficient."

Śrīla Prabhupāda had rarely been so conclusive about nuclear war. Earlier in the year, on a walk in Māyāpur, he had discussed how there would be a World War III, and that talk had become a sensation throughout ISKCON. But before, he had always offered the alternative: if the people of the world could take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then the cumulative karma could be reversed. But now he said it was inevitable.

While in Berkeley, Śrīla Prabhupāda received a visit from Yogi Bhajan, founder of the HHH Foundation, Swami Chidananda, president of the Divine Life Society, and Jain leader Swami Sushill Muni, president of the World Fellowship of Religion. Swami Sushill wore a white turban and, across his mouth, a white mask, in the tradition of the nonviolent Jains, who try to avoid killing even airborne microbes. Yogi Bhajan, dressed in typical Sikh fashion of white turban and white loose-fitting garments, was accompanied by a few of his Western disciples, similarly attired. Visits from various swamis and yogīs were not uncommon for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Even when he did not agree with a particular philosophy, he was always the cordial host, pleasantly receiving guests in his simple quarters.

In Hawaii Yogi Bhajan had also visited Śrīla Prabhupāda to invite him to his Unity of Man Conference, which many sādhus were already scheduled to attend. Śrīla Prabhupāda had spoken sternly, pointing out that simply gathering people at a meeting was not unity. Real unity could be achieved only if the participants of the meeting agreed to accept the authorized science of God in the revealed scriptures. Now they had come to invite him to a second Unity of Man conference.

Swami Sushill and Swami Chidananda were particularly enthusiastic in praising Śrīla Prabhupāda and his ISKCON. "Your movement is something different," said Swami Chidananda. "It's all over the world, and you have so many thousands of people all over the world. We can't describe it. It's so amazing, and in this age how wonderfully it has been done! Without God's mercy nothing could have been done. That six lakhs of magazines have come out and been distributed in one month—it's amazing!"

Swami Sushill added, "You have established the same principles without any change here in a modern way. In Bengal, without your āśrama we couldn't have done anything. When we know there is an āśrama of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we don't need to worry about anything, where to stay. What strikes me is that you don't compromise anywhere."

They mentioned the horrible sin of cow slaughter, and Śrīla Prabhupāda told how his movement was protecting cows in New Vrindaban. When Swami Sushill asked how Prabhupāda interested the young people in God, Prabhupāda gave the example that the most popular sweet shop in Delhi was the one where everything was made with pure ghee. "If the thing is good," Prabhupāda said, "then there won't be a shortage of customers." He further pointed out that his teachings were based purely on Bhagavad-gītā, surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

When Swami Sushill asked how Prabhupāda got his followers to take shelter of Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda replied, "It's God who did it. God says, *mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*. So that is our duty—just to take shelter of Him. Lord Caitanya says, *yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa*. That is, whoever you meet, just preach the teachings of Kṛṣṇa as in the Bhagavad-gītā. I don't have any upadeśa [instructions]. It's just Kṛṣṇa's upadeśa. We are all foolish. We can't have any upadeśa. So what are the teachings of Kṛṣṇa? We just keep on saying them. Kṛṣṇa says do like that, and that's what we do. So this is our secret. I do this, and that's what I teach to all these people. I am totally against manufactured religion. *Evam paramparā-prāptam*—just as Kṛṣṇa says."

In reply to Swami Sushill's question of how people could be brought together, Prabhupāda quoted a verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam that lists many races of the world and explains that all of them can be purified by taking shelter of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee.

Prabhupāda's guests again invited him to their conference, and Swami Sushill added, "We were very glad to meet you today. We would like to call you sometime in our meeting of yoga-dharma."

"We'll come," said Prabhupāda. "What about your fellowship?"

"It's called World Fellowship of Religion," said Swami Chidananda. "Yogiji has made this Unity of Man Conference."

"But we invited him," said Yogi Bhajan, referring to the previous invitation.

Swami Chidananda: "But now you are having the second one."

Yogi Bhajan: "Yes, the second meeting is in Mexico. We will call him then as well."

Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled and said, "I told you before, there is not going to be any unity." This candid remark made them laugh.

"You say," said Swami Chidananda, remembering Prabhupāda's analysis, "that until everyone is God-minded, until then... "

"When God will desire," said Yogi Bhajan, "then everyone will become God-minded. What's the great deal about it?"

"God Himself says," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam—there is suffering. You cannot stay in this world. You have to leave. The main problem is birth, old age, disease, and death. So we are not anxious to adjust these things here, but these are the real problems."

"What can we do about birth, old age, disease, and death?" asked Swami Chidananda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued preaching Bhagavad-gītā. Without overtly disagreeing, Prabhupāda's guests inquired and listened with respect, considering him a great spiritual leader, potent in spreading Hindu dharma.

"He is great," said Yogi Bhajan. "That's what I want to learn—how he can do that."

The conversation turned, and Prabhupāda mentioned that Yogi Bhajan was from the Sikh community, which is famous for its brave fighters. "When the British people were defeated," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "it was by the Sikh people. I have seen it. It is due to the Sikhs only. The Sikhs are kṣatriyas. Some of them are brāhmaṇas, brāhmaṇa-kṣatriyas."

Swami Sushill: "Yes, I said to some of my students that you go to Prabhupādajī, and he'll make you brāhmaṇa-kṣatriyas."

Prabhupāda: “Yes, let us cooperate like that. You take the work of kṣatriyas, and we take the work of brāhmaṇas. For brāhmaṇas we need brain, and for kṣatriyas we need strength.”

As they spoke about nonviolence, Śrīla Prabhupāda argued that if one does not become God conscious, then he will undoubtedly be committing himśā, or violence.

Yogi Bhajan: “Yes, when they come to their senses, then they remember God.”

Prabhupāda (laughing): “Here in the West there is only himśā, nothing else.” Prabhupāda's guests laughed with him.

Afterward, they took some photographs, and Śrīla Prabhupāda invited them, along with some of his disciples, to sit and take Kṛṣṇa prasādam together. Śrīla Prabhupāda requested his guests to attend the San Francisco Ratha-yātrā, to be held the next day, and they agreed.

July 20, 1975

This was not only the largest ISKCON Ratha-yatra ever but also the largest gathering of devotees to date, larger even than the international gathering at Māyāpur earlier that year. Preparations at the festival site had expanded to include prasādam booths, Deity paraphernalia displays, souvenirs, and Prabhupāda's books. Thousands joined the more than eight hundred devotees in the procession through Golden Gate Park.

Because the builders of the carts had decided to make steel wheels instead of the usual wooden ones, difficulty arose. Śrīla Prabhupāda had warned them, “This is your American disease—always changing. Do not change the old design.” But they had already done it. Riding in Subhadrā's cart, which had wooden wheels, Śrīla Prabhupāda experienced no personal inconvenience. The other two carts, however, did not fare so well; they began to vibrate so severely that support beams had to be added to the spokes during the procession. Soon the wheels became misshapen, and they creaked and rattled as though about to collapse. But somehow, after much difficulty, all three carts completed the course.

In the midst of the Ratha-yatra activities, one of the devotees asked Śrīla Prabhupāda if he had ever attended the Ratha-yatra festival in Jagannātha Purī. “No,” Prabhupāda replied, “I was having my own Ratha-yatra.”

SPL 47: Preaching to America: Part 2

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Preaching to America:

Part 2

= Los Angeles

July 22, 1975

More than three weeks had passed since Prabhupāda had given the order for the BBT to produce seventeen books in two months. Now Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha reported that work was going on around the clock in all departments and that devotees were determined to meet their deadlines. Most Press workers attended maṅgala-arati at four-thirty A.M., chanted their prescribed rounds of japa, and worked all day until late at night, sometimes taking only one meal.

Additional editors, painters, photographers, indexers, typists, proofreaders, and layout men had been called in from other ISKCON departments. Everyone was cooperating to fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire. It was as though nothing else existed except the task before them.

Kingsport Press, one of the largest printers in the country, had taken the job of printing, agreeing to push back all other assignments to free their presses and bindery for work twenty-four hours a day until all seventeen volumes were printed. A paper company in New York had agreed to supply paper at affordable terms to meet all the deadlines. The BBT's top photographer was in India photographing places of Caitanya līlā, especially in Bengal and Orissa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda freely gave his time to the artists and the Bengali editors, answering their questions. Several times a day his disciples would come to him about the exact use of Sanskrit and Bengali words. This was not merely a matter of lingual scholarship, since each word had to be translated in light of the previous ācārya's explanations and Prabhupāda's own Kṛṣṇa conscious realization. Prabhupāda had cautioned disciple editors not to change but to ask.

The artists had their usual questions about how things should look according to Śrīla Prabhupāda's transcendental vision. In their desire to have the paintings completely accurate, they were greedy to ask him almost endless questions. Prabhupāda had said the transcendental paintings of his disciples were windows to the spiritual world; the artists didn't want their imaginations to obscure the view.

One day, Rāmeśvara came into Śrīla Prabhupāda's room carrying canvases by one of the artists whose proficiency the more experienced artists questioned. The artist in question, Gaurī-devī dāśī, was a book distributor with artistic talent, pressed into emergency service for the book production marathon. Rāmeśvara showed Śrīla Prabhupāda her painting of the Guṇḍicā temple. Prabhupāda's verdict: "Oh, this is very nice." One of the senior artists was present and pointed out several technical errors, but Prabhupāda replied, "A blind uncle is better than none." Besides, he said, the painting showed a devotional spirit the readers of the book would appreciate.

Due to Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence in Los Angeles, the book production marathon intensified. Even without attending Prabhupāda's morning walks or classes or evening readings in the garden, the Press workers felt ecstasy. All day they worked at what Prabhupāda wanted most, and to take time off to go see him, they reasoned, would be selfish. Giving all their energy for Kṛṣṇa, they felt blissful.

The Press was busy day and night. To see devotees slumped over their desks or typewriters or lying beside their easels at two or three in the morning was not unusual. Proofreaders saw manuscripts

come into and out of their hands so quickly they could hardly bear it. An artist might fall asleep before an uncompleted painting and awaken to find it being finished at another artist's easel.

Rāmeśvara, running on very little sleep, orchestrated everything, including the photographer in India, the printer, and the paper company. Sometimes he would work directly with Rādhāvallabha on various aspects of the production.

Rādhāvallabha had set the deadlines, and he kept to them at all costs. To the Press workers, he seemed to be present everywhere—encouraging them, bringing them supplies, seeing to their needs, begging and coercing them to complete their quotas. But one night he took a break and entered Prabhupāda's room during an informal gathering of devotees. Prabhupāda, his eyes closed, his head gently rocking, was listening to a tape of himself singing bhajanas. Opening his eyes and seeing Rādhāvallabha seated among the others, he said, "I am keeping you," and again closed his eyes.

One of the devotees spoke up and said, "Oh, no, no, Prabhupāda. You're not bothering us." But another devotee turned to Rādhāvallabha and said, "I think Prabhupāda was talking to you." Rādhāvallabha realized what Prabhupāda meant; he was telling him to go back to work. It was as if Prabhupāda were actually saying, "Why are you sitting here looking at me? Get back to work."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased with the sincerity of his disciples. Seventeen books in two months he had asked them to produce, and they, rather than try to explain to him why this was impossible, had taken the order so seriously that they could not conceive of rejecting or changing or modifying it. Instead of modifying the order, they had modified their lives. They had gone beyond the realm of routine work into the realm of extraordinary effort. As a result, both they and Prabhupāda felt great satisfaction. As Prabhupāda said, it was all an arrangement for the satisfaction of Lord Caitanya and the previous ācāryas.

Śrīla Prabhupāda decided to continue his U.S. tour, visiting Laguna Beach and San Diego and then going on to Dallas. From there he would visit New Orleans and the nearby ISKCON farm in Mississippi. Then on to Detroit, Toronto, Boston, and New York, eventually traveling to Europe and India.

From Prabhupāda's point of view, his touring was imperative for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As he had said in his arrival address at Berkeley, "I am traveling all over the world, twice, thrice in a year. My duty is to see that my disciples, who have accepted me as guru, may not fall down. That is my anxiety."

Prabhupāda's concern was for his disciples, but also for all people. Distressed by the fallen and ignorant state of humanity, especially in the West, he wanted to help the English-speaking world, as his spiritual master had ordered. This had been his spirit two years ago in Calcutta, when he had risen from his sickbed and flown to London to take part in the Ratha-yatra. This was his great desire: to preach in the West, where people were so strongly under the grip of speculative philosophies, denying God and glorifying sense enjoyment. The mass of people would not easily change their ignorant ways, but if he could make only one person a pure devotee, he said, then his work would be successful.

Prabhupāda would work intensively with his important India projects for a few months, but then would always return to the West to again tour and preach. Both were required—developing his projects in India and touring the West. When Yogi Bhaṇan and company in Berkeley had expressed their amazement at how Prabhupāda was personally maintaining his disciples by traveling all over the world, Prabhupāda had admitted that it was difficult and that he was trying to train his G.B.C. secretaries to lead his movement. But so far, it seemed that as long as he had the power to do so, he would continue to travel.

* * *

Laguna Beach

July 25, 1975

Laguna Beach was about a two-hour drive south of Los Angeles. The temple, a house near the beach, was crowded with guests and visiting devotees. After Prabhupāda had taken his seat upon the newly up holstered vyāsāsana, some of the temple leaders came forward one at a time and bathed his feet.

In the course of his lecture, Prabhupāda spoke against taking intoxicating drugs: “Is there anyone here who can say, ‘I am the controller’? Is there anyone who will answer this? You may think that you are the controller, but you are controlled by drugs...” The city of Laguna Beach was notorious as an illicit drug center. Prabhupāda had come not to flatter anyone with sentimental spirituality but to cut through their illusion. Bathing the feet of the spiritual master was good, but to be a genuine devotee one had to strictly follow the regulations. One had to choose whether to be controlled by drugs or by Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda stayed next door to the temple in a neighbor's house. His first visitor was Ṛṣi dāsa, who had given up his initiation vows and fallen away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Sporting long, curly hair and a beard, he had casually dropped by to pay a little visit to his former spiritual master. Prabhupāda received Ṛṣi warmly, and they both exchanged smiles and laughed. Ṛṣi's demeanor, however, was brazen, almost defiant, and he showed no contrition. Prabhupāda was not very happy to see the state of this boy to whom he had awarded the sannyāsa order a few years before.

In earlier years, Prabhupāda had cried when a dear disciple had left him. In those days, the fall of a disciple had been rare, almost unheard of. But over the years Prabhupāda had seen more casualties, even among his G.B.C. leaders and sannyāsīs. In 1967, when one of his first disciples, Kṛṣṇa-devī dāsī, had left her husband, Subala, and gone off with a boyfriend, Prabhupāda had consoled Subala by reminding him how rare it was that one could become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. “The wonderful thing is not that Kṛṣṇa dāsī has left,” Śrīla Prabhupāda had said, “but that we can stay in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Although devotees left Kṛṣṇa consciousness for various reasons, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw them all as having been tricked by illusion. The result was almost always the same, whether the defector left on

the plea of a new religion, or new economic opportunities, or whatever; usually he or she would take up a life of sense gratification, abandoning the strict path of self-realization.

This was certainly true of R̥ṣi. When Prabhupāda asked him what he was doing with his life, he laughed and said he was playing saxophone. There was no need to ask him whether he was chanting sixteen rounds or following the four rules. But R̥ṣi wanted to assure Śrīla Prabhupāda that he was doing fine. "I think I have more freedom now," said R̥ṣi.

"Do you think you have freedom?" Prabhupāda challenged.

"Some," R̥ṣi replied. "By studying and working."

"What is your age?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Twenty-nine."

"Are you free not to become older?" Śrīla Prabhupāda persisted.

"No."

"Then what is your freedom?"

R̥ṣi gave a short laugh. "I don't care."

"That's all right," Prabhupāda replied, "but I am researching. I am now seventy-eight. I don't wish to die, but I am forced. But you too are forced to become old. No one wants to be old."

Recalling some of the Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, R̥ṣi tried to argue against Prabhupāda, saying that although he was forced to grow old, according to transmigration of the soul he would be free after death. And anyway, there were other freedoms.

Prabhupāda stuck to his original point and said, "Death is inevitable. Old age, no one wants. Everyone wants youth. Even an old man goes to the beach for health. I want youth, but I cannot have it. So where is the freedom?"

Prabhupāda then spoke at length, for R̥ṣi's benefit as well as for the benefit of the other devotees in the room. Persons under the influence of māyā, he said, declare that they are free. The drug addict or the drunkard thinks he is free—to lie down on the street. Yet his actions involve him in the strict laws of material nature. The outlaw declares himself free from the laws of the state, but he is put into jail. What is the use of his saying he is free? "Therefore Kṛṣṇa says," Prabhupāda explained, "that 'Whatever little freedom you have got, just surrender that freedom to Me.'"

Prabhupāda's comments on false freedom were to the point. Within two hours of his arrival, he had already exposed the Laguna Beach mystique. R̥ṣi continued to smile and argue, but before Prabhupāda he was just another youth with no real answers. Prabhupāda was not interested in

debating; he wanted to help his disciple. Ṛṣi, however, was using whatever freedom he had to defy Kṛṣṇa's representative, trusting instead in his youth, his intoxication, and his music.

The door opened. "These are some professors, Śrīla Prabhupāda," announced a devotee, "who form part of our congregation." Prabhupāda greeted the new guests and asked that they sit up front on cushions.

"I was talking with this boy about freedom," said Prabhupāda. "So I say there is no freedom for us. We are always dependent. What is your opinion about it?" One of the professors said he agreed, and Prabhupāda continued speaking. He talked with the professors for more than an hour.

Near the end, Upendra's three-year-old son, Saumya, walked up to Prabhupāda from the back of the room. Prabhupāda gave him some money that was on the desk, and the boy ran back to his mother and gave her the money. "Yes. When I was young," Prabhupāda reminisced, "if I got money I would take it to my mother. But then when I would become angry at her, I would demand it back. Sometimes I would steal money from my mother's purse and go watch Charlie Chaplin movies." His favorite scene was in a film called *Hard Times*, he said, when Charlie Chaplin sat down at a table with a knife and fork to eat a boot.

* * *

San Diego

July 27, 1975

Śrīla Prabhupāda rode down the San Diego Freeway in the predawn darkness, on his way to San Diego to attend a festival in Balboa Park. On the way he passed through San Clemente, where former president Richard Nixon was staying. Prabhupāda had followed Nixon's exposure and resignation and had often mentioned it in his lectures, sometimes as an example of how even the most powerful men are subject to anxiety and loss, sometimes to illustrate the need for proper training in the four natural social orders.

A devotee mentioned that Mr. Nixon lived here with no position, scorned by his countrymen. "Then you should go and preach to him," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. Since the man had lost everything and was lamenting, he said, he might be receptive to hearing about the Absolute Truth. Prabhupāda had attempted a similar approach to Mahātmā Gandhi.

At Balboa Park Prabhupāda was pleased with the devotees' booths and colorful tents and the stage they had erected in the meadow. He had just begun addressing the large crowd, when a man in the audience began shouting. Prabhupāda asked what he was saying, and a devotee explained, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, the man says he wants to have sex more than once a month."

"He is creating disturbance," said Prabhupāda into the microphone.

After a tense moment, Prabhupāda continued his lecture. "So, as this man is talking about sex, so this whole material world is enchanted by sex." Taking the shouted protest as a new focus for his

speech, Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted Prahāda Mahārāja's statement that all material entanglement begins from sexual enjoyment, which in comparison to transcendental pleasure is paltry and abominable. "But real happiness," Prabhupāda asserted, "is above the senses. Whatever we enjoy with the gross senses is temporary, but permanent enjoyment is transcendental.

"So this man," he continued, "was suggesting he wants sex at least once in a month. Yes, that is allowed. Five days after the wife's menstrual period the husband and wife can have sex for begetting rightful children." Prabhupāda used the Vedic technical term, *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*, to describe the process of purifying sex within marriage. The devotees were astonished that before a crowd of sexually liberated Southern Californians Prabhupāda was espousing responsible, legitimate sex. Usually he discussed such matters, if at all, in letters to householders. But if the Americans were intent on sex, then Prabhupāda would let them have it. But he stressed responsible, restricted sex. Otherwise, by irresponsible sex, one has to suffer.

"Sex life is not denied," Prabhupāda said, "but one must take responsibility for sex life. Otherwise he becomes entangled in so many sinful activities. You can have sex life once in a month. That is prescribed. Because a woman has once in a month menstrual period. So sex life is meant for simply begetting nice children, not for sense gratification. If it is in regulative form, the world may not become hell. If it is in irregular form, then the whole world will be hell. Sex life is not denied. Sex life is not denied, but in a regulated form, so that you can get nice population and live very happily.

"Especially at the present moment, if you can produce children to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, that would be a great service to the Lord, because we want a Kṛṣṇa conscious population. Otherwise this world is going to hell. There were great empires like the Roman, Greek, and later on the Mogul empire, the British empire. Then there was Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini. So all these powerful empires and men have come and gone. Only a name is there now. Nothing is remaining. So I came to your country, America. I decided to come here because I heard your country is very nice, and when I came here I saw actually that your country is very nice—your cities, your buildings. Your men also—because mostly my students are Americans, and they help me very kindly to push on this movement.

"So I have studied the American life very nicely. They have a good heart. The only thing that is wanting is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For want of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness, despite all your opulences, you are becoming confused and frustrated. I hear that out of three, one man is a patient of a psychiatrist. Why? Why are you unhappy? Why should you be unhappy? You have got everything—enough food, land, money, intelligence. Why should you be unhappy? The cause of this you should try to find out. The cause is that without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without God consciousness, nobody can be happy."

The outdoor audience was now quiet and attentive. Prabhupāda spoke for about forty minutes, ranging over different areas of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, and concluded with a request to the American men and women to seriously cooperate in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and thereby find happiness. His talk was greeted with cheers, and the devotees continued to host the crowd throughout the afternoon, chanting and dancing and distributing prasādam.

An Indian visitor was explaining to Prabhupāda why India had to build up nuclear weapons and armed forces, but Prabhupāda disagreed. The reason, he said, was the dearth of genuine kṣatriyas. There were no more men of courage; therefore a woman was now in charge.

In the newspapers also had been much coverage of a U.S. merchant ship, the *Mayaguez*, which, when sailing within the twelve-mile limit of Cambodia, had been seized without warning. President Ford had taken a strong stand, sending in the U.S. Marines. Fifteen Marines had been killed and fifty wounded in recovering the vessel, and the U.S. had bombed Cambodia. It was proper, Prabhupāda said, for the U.S. to take a strong stand in defending its citizens abroad. “Yes, America should be strong,” he asserted. “But first of all they should become Kṛṣṇa conscious. If they were actually a Kṛṣṇa conscious nation, they should declare, ‘If you touch the hair of one of our men, there will be a fight.’ ”

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke strongly, giving the devotees a vision of a powerful America leading the world in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And this stirred within them hopes for a pure patriotism, such as in the ancient Vedic culture, when the world had been ruled by God conscious leaders.

The next morning, before going to the airport, Śrīla Prabhupāda took a walk in Balboa Park. Hearing the sweet singing of birds, he said they were happy. “They just take the fruits, and they are singing in the morning,” he said.

Rāmeśvara: “But when we tell people that they may take their next birth as an animal or bird, they say that's all right, because these creatures are happier than the humans.”

Prabhupāda: “But because you are rascal, you do not know that you can become more happy—go back home, back to Godhead. That you do not know.”

Devotees liked to bring before Śrīla Prabhupāda all kinds of topics for his comment. Conversations would jump from one thing to another as devotees sometimes brought up horrendous examples of contemporary degradation or sometimes tested their own doubts by posing as agnostics. Or sometimes they would simply bring to Prabhupāda's attention ordinary sights and sounds. Whatever the topic, Prabhupāda showed the devotees how to see things from the transcendental perspective. And thus he also showed to them his own purity and humanness. When a devotee told Prabhupāda that Balboa was the first man to see the Pacific, Prabhupāda at first seemed impressed, but a moment later he scoffed, “Everyone was already there. That they do not know. The Pacific and Atlantic oceans are mentioned in Kalidāsa Kavi's book *Kumāra-sambhava*. They are all mentioned—Pacific, Atlantic oceans. These fools do not know anything. They say, ‘I am the first man to come,’ as if before him there was no man. Just see!”

Prabhupāda complimented the devotees on the previous day's festival in the park and advised them to hold such festivals every day. “You are so rich,” he said laughingly, “you can do it. Continual festival. Tell them, ‘Come on. Take prasādam. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.’ Just like—what is that? Who told me?—continual massage.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami: “Yes, they have twenty-four-hour massage parlors.”

"Twenty-four hours," Prabhupāda said, laughing. "Similarly, twenty-four-hours free prasādam—come on. But they are not hungry. Not for that."

While walking to a meadow, they came upon a man standing on his head. "Is this our man?" Prabhupāda asked.

The devotees laughed and replied, "No, yoga."

"He wants to be immortal," said Rāmeśvara.

"No," said Prabhupāda. "This keeps them healthy."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "It's good for the body?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, śīrṣāsana it is called, sitting on the head. Śīrṣāsana, padmāsana, yogāsana—there are so many āsanās."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "We don't practice those."

"Yes, we have no time from sleeping," said Prabhupāda sarcastically. The devotees laughed at his cutting remark. "Otherwise," Prabhupāda continued, "this is not bad. This is not bad. It keeps good health, this yoga-āsana."

Hearing Prabhupāda's surprising praise of haṭha yoga, a devotee asked the inevitable—"So if we have time, can we do that?"

By now they had finished their walk and had arrived back at the cars. Śrīla Prabhupāda chuckled, as if aware that he was being baited with a controversial question. "Hare Kṛṣṇa," he said. On getting into the car, he added, "Not required."

* * *

Dallas

July 28, 1975

"Swami, why are you here?" asked a reporter at the Dallas–Forth Worth Airport.

"This is my home," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. The reply delighted his disciples. "I have got so many children, grandchildren. So I have come to see them."

Śrīla Prabhupāda had written about Dallas Gurukula in his commentary on the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, he had written, was training a new generation of Vaiṣṇavas in its own school in Dallas, Texas.

More than a hundred boys and girls were now enrolled, and Śrīla Prabhupāda liked to visit here whenever he toured the United States. Here, as in other ISKCON projects in the U.S., he involved himself little in the management; but he visited, making himself available to the teachers, who were always ready with questions. Since there was no precedent in the West for Kṛṣṇa conscious education, and since the devotees wanted to develop the school just as Prabhupāda desired, they felt they had to ask him about curriculum, teaching methods, hygiene, recreation, and so on.

In the one-hundred-degree weather, the schoolboys wore no shirts, and Śrīla Prabhupāda ran the electric fan in his room. As soon as he arrived in his quarters, he asked that all the children and adults come into his room, and one by one they entered his room, held out a hand, and Prabhupāda gave them a large rasagulā. That evening he sat in a rocking chair on the lawn behind the temple, while devotees fanned him with a large peacock fan and locusts droned loudly in the trees. He sat there with his disciples amid many thriving tulasī plants, listening to a reading from the Kṛṣṇa book. This was as much a lesson in how to conduct a gurukula as were his answers to the teachers' intricate questions. At Gurukula, everything should be based on chanting and hearing about Kṛṣṇa.

Brahmānanda Swami was reading about Kṛṣṇa's rescuing His beloved Rukmiṇī, when suddenly Śrīla Prabhupāda interrupted and said that when they had been escaping on Kṛṣṇa's chariot and the other princes had been attacking, Rukmiṇī had taken the reins and had driven the chariot. Kṛṣṇa had then taken His bow and arrows and had defeated His opponents. The devotees were amazed. Many of them were keen students of Kṛṣṇa book, and nowhere was that particular detail mentioned. Never before had any of them heard of Rukmiṇī's taking the reins, nor had they ever thought of her in that way. But Prabhupāda assured them that she had fearlessly driven Kṛṣṇa's chariot during the fight.

While Prabhupāda was speaking, Dayānanda, the Gurukula headmaster, stretched out his leg to find a more comfortable position, and Prabhupāda turned to him and said sternly, "Do not put your feet near Tulasī. She is a pure devotee."

When Brahmānanda read a prayer in the Kṛṣṇa book describing Kṛṣṇa as the creator of the material elements, Prabhupāda spoke up. "If we do not accept that Kṛṣṇa made the sky," he challenged, "then who made it?" The blue of the Texas sky was now fading into twilight, and guests and devotees alike looked up at the sky and then back to Prabhupāda.

"According to Bhagavad-gītā," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Kṛṣṇa made the sky—bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuḥ kham. So we should study like this—aham sarvasya prabhavaḥ. The sky is the greatest material thing, but He created it. In this way, study Kṛṣṇa. Not just studying Kṛṣṇa with the gopīs—then you will misunderstand. But the more you understand Kṛṣṇa, the more you will become His staunch follower. Unauthorized persons never paint Kṛṣṇa creating the sky. They always want to see Kṛṣṇa dancing with the gopīs, and in this way they try to support their own lusty activities."

Two Dallas newspapers had covered Prabhupāda's arrival. The Dallas Times Herald printed a photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda seated and garlanded with roses, his right hand raised, his index finger extended, instructing. "Barefoot swami draws admiring Krishna crowd," the headline read.

Aside from claiming that Śrīla Prabhupāda was barefoot (actually he had worn shoes but had removed them when sitting cross-legged), the article pointed out a controversy around the Kṛṣṇa devotees in Dallas. The article cited ISKCON's injunction against officials of the Dallas– Fort Worth Airport, who had forbidden them to distribute literature and take donations.

On hearing the article, Śrīla Prabhupāda had commented, “This is good literature. It should be encouraged.” By reading it, people would become sane, and they would understand their constitutional position. Otherwise the people would go on being perturbed by crime and wondering what to do.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was particularly interested in the newspaper's version of his reply to the question about Indian politics.

... the Swami replied that, “Mrs. Gandhi is inclined to some spiritual understanding, and if she fully develops it the situation will improve.

“Democracy is not much beneficial if its leaders have no spiritual values. Mahatma Gandhi was practically a dictator, but he was a man of a high moral character, so people accepted him. Dictatorship can be good, provided the dictator is spiritually developed.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was repeatedly being asked about Indira Gandhi. The U.S. government was critical of her newly instituted emergency rule, and particularly in Chicago, the reporters had tried to construe Prabhupāda's comments about women as criticism of Prime Minister Gandhi. Both in Chicago and Dallas Śrīla Prabhupāda had stressed that he was not much concerned with politics, although he indicated that politics were useless without Kṛṣṇa.

Eager to keep good relations with the Indian government, Prabhupāda did not like to speak publicly against India's leaders. He had often expressed a desire to meet with the Prime Minister to assure her of the good work the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was doing for the benefit of India and the whole world, and to request her assistance. In India, visas had always been a problem for the devotees. They had to continually leave the country and their service to renew their visas and then reenter, at great cost. Now some devotees, especially in the Māyāpur area, were being asked to leave the country because of America's stance against Indira Gandhi's political actions. recently Prabhupāda had received word from the devotees in Delhi that they were trying to arrange such a meeting. So he liked the favorable statements on Indira Gandhi in the Dallas Times Herald and asked that the article be saved.

While walking near White Rock Lake the morning he was to leave for New Orleans, Śrīla Prabhupāda dropped behind the main group of devotees and said to his servant, “I am not feeling well.” The few sannyāsīs close by pressed in near him with concern. “Yesterday also,” he added.

“Is it due to the heat, Śrīla Prabhupāda?”

“I do not know why, but now I am feeling headache and some spasm.”

"Should we cancel the trip this morning?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't answer. He admitted, however, the heat may have weakened his digestion. When asked if the food was to his liking, he replied, "Not very all right. Constantly change of hand is not good." Brahmānanda Swami suggested that another difficulty for health was the constant flying, but when he again suggested postponing the flight to New Orleans, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "No, no," and continued forward.

* * *

July 31

The weather was stormy enroute to New Orleans. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in the first-class section with Upendra, was looking out the window when the "Fasten Your Seat Belt" announcement came, just ten minutes before the scheduled landing.

Suddenly the plane dropped violently. Passengers screamed and clutched their armrests, bracing themselves. Upendra, frightened speechless, thought, If I have to die, it's all right, because Prabhupāda is here. The downward plunge stopped abruptly, but then the plane began to lurch and roll, tossed by turbulent air currents. Overhead bins snapped open, and articles fell out, bouncing off passengers and onto the floor. Śrīla Prabhupāda turned to Upendra. "Why is it rocking?" he asked.

"It's a storm," replied Upendra. He could see that Śrīla Prabhupāda was calm. His expression was one of irritation, like over some minor incident, as when his lunch would be served late.

In wind and downpour, the pilot finally touched the wheels onto the runway, landing without mishap. A sigh rose from the passengers, then cheering and applause. Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed unaffected. He asked Upendra how long a drive it would be to the temple.

Śrīla Prabhupāda and his party arrived at the large mansion on Esplanade Boulevard in heavy rain. Nityānanda, the New Orleans temple president, having been given two weeks' notice of Prabhupāda's visit, had hurriedly repainted and readied all the buildings, both here and at the Mississippi farm. Despite a thorough search of the city's markets, however, he had been unable to find any bitter melon, which he had heard Śrīla Prabhupāda took daily for digestion. Therefore he had arranged for one of Prabhupāda's secretaries to bring some from Dallas. Nityānanda and the New Orleans devotees felt they were as ready for Prabhupāda's visit as they would ever be.

A wide marble staircase led up to the entrance, and Prabhupāda, leaning on his cane, climbed it slowly, as devotees threw flower petals down from the third floor. The entire distance from the car to the house, about 250 feet, was covered with a three-foot-wide white cloth, leading up to the vyāsāsana. Prabhupāda bowed down before the Deities of Gaura-Nitāi, Rādhā-Rādhākānta, and Lord Jagannātha, sat down, but then decided it was too late in the morning to speak. Instead, he went at once to his quarters in the building next door.

As soon as Śrīla Prabhupāda reached his room, he was introduced to an official from City Hall who had come from the mayor's office to present him with an honorary welcome to New Orleans. Prabhupāda graciously accepted a symbolic key to the city and a scroll welcoming and praising him as an honorable visitor. Seizing the opportunity, he began preaching to the man, treating his guest not as a city official but as any other conditioned soul.

When the welcoming flurry had abated and Śrīla Prabhupāda had bathed, taken prasādam, and rested, he called for Nityānanda. When Nityānanda entered, Prabhupāda had sandalwood pulp on his forehead and wore a fresh garland. Nityānanda offered obeisances. Alone in the room with his spiritual master, he felt embarrassed and fearful. Prabhupāda picked up a photo album from his desk containing pictures of the farm in Mississippi. "You know," he said, "I have come especially to see your farm."

Before sunrise the next morning Śrīla Prabhupāda left in the rain on a two-hour drive to the farm. He would have to return to New Orleans that night, as he was scheduled to fly to Detroit the next morning.

The rain had stopped in Carriere, Mississippi, and Śrīla Prabhupāda looked out across the gently rolling land. The ISKCON farm—cleared land, surrounded by a pine forest—was situated on a ridge. The previous owner had used the property as a horse ranch, and the modern fourteen-room brick house, the large barn, and several sheds were all in good condition. Prabhupāda liked the land. He said it looked just like Bengal.

Most of the devotees from New Orleans had raced to the farm to be with Prabhupāda, and they crowded into the temple room, waiting for him to give the morning Bhāgavatam class. As soon as he began to speak, however, many flies came, buzzing, landing on his head and body. A devotee began fanning him with a cāmara whisk, but to no avail.

"Come near," Prabhupāda said. "This cāmara is especially meant for driving away the flies. Even it is touching the body, there is no harm."

Toward the end of the lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda began speaking of the farm. "Now this place, I see, although I have not seen all, it is a nice place. The gṛhasthas may come here, have some small cottage, grow your own food grains and vegetables, and have your own cow's milk. Get nice foodstuff, and save time. Why should you go into the city hundreds of miles in a car and again hundreds of miles back and take unnecessary trouble? Stick to this spot and grow your own food, make your own cloth, and live peacefully. Save time and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is actual life.

"What is this nonsense life—big, big cities, and all these people busy? To see a friend he has to go thirty miles. If he has to see a physician, he has to go fifty miles. If he has to go to work, another hundred miles. So what is this life? This is not life. Be satisfied. A devotee's life should be prayojana. We require material necessities—as much as is required. No artificial life."

Śrīla Prabhupāda went on to deprecate the life of "simply machine, machine, machine, machine." He asked the devotees to show by practical example how to live simply and advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If they could show the example, people would try to follow.

Although Nityānanda and the others had been living on the land for many months, Prabhupāda's words gave them the real direction and purpose for the project. It was as if he were now breathing life into his project.

Śrīla Prabhupāda went to his room and sat with Brahmānanda Swami, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Harikeśa, Jagadīśa, and Upendra. When he began speaking about varṇāśrama, he called for Nityānanda. They should try not to use machines, he said. The men and animals should do the work.

Nityānanda asked whether the householders should produce food cooperatively or as individual families. "They should work together," said Prabhupāda, "or what's the use of living in a community center?"

When Upendra asked how the milk should be used, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained what he called the Indian village system. "As Nanda Mahārāja was keeping cows," he said, "similarly there are many villages. They have a big pan, and whatever milk is collected they put into that pan. It is kept on a fire and is warm. So the whole family can drink milk whenever they like. Then whatever milk remains at night, they have to convert it into yogurt. The next day they use milk and yogurt also as they like. Then after converting the milk into yogurt, whatever remains is stored. If there is sufficient old yogurt, they churn, and then butter comes out. They take that butter, and the water separated from the butter is called whey. So instead of dāl, they use this whey for eating with capātīs. It will be very healthy and tasty. Meanwhile, the butter they turn into ghee. There is not a single drop of waste."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that everyone could take as much milk as necessary and that the ghee could be used in ISKCON restaurants in the cities. Curd could also be used in the restaurants for making sandeśa, rasagulā, and other dishes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that the farm be well organized, engaging all classes of men—brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras. No laziness or unemployment. "Otherwise," he said, "people will criticize that we are simply eating and sleeping and escaping."

Nityānanda asked whether they should immediately stop using farm machinery.

"We are not against the machine," Prabhupāda explained. "You can utilize machine. But we should not allow others to be unemployed while we use the machine. This is the point. You can use the machine, but the first thing is that everyone should be employed. If you have got many men, then why should you engage the machine?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda also explained that in Vedic culture, the kṣatriyas collected taxes and protected the citizens while the śūdras worked in the fields or at trade. The women would cook, spin, weave, and take care of the milk products. The low-class men, such as cobblers, who used the skin of dead cows, were allowed to eat meat. "But not that one is Professor Such-and-such and yet he is eating meat," Prabhupāda said. "This is the way of the degraded modern society. Teacher means brāhmaṇa, and yet he is eating meat. How horrible! So do these things and organize. I can give you

the idea, but I will not live very long. If you can carry it out, you can change the whole world. Especially if you can change America, then the whole world will change."

Śrīla Prabhupāda became emotional, and tears came to his eyes. "It is the duty!" he said. "Caitanya Mahāprabhu has explained para-upakāra: Save them! If it is not possible to save everyone—as many as possible. This is human life. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness—to save those who are in the darkness.

"Don't think," he said, "'Kṛṣṇa consciousness is my profession. I am getting a living, food, and shelter.' That is just what the Indians are doing. Not like that. It is para-upakāra. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then Kṛṣṇa will be very much pleased. Kṛṣṇa personally comes for giving this benefit to the people, and if you do, then how much Kṛṣṇa will be pleased. Just like I am traveling to my centers, and if I see that my students, my men, are doing very nice, everything is going nice, how much pleased I will be. Then I can save my labors and now write books for the rest of my life. Similarly, if Kṛṣṇa sees that you are, on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, trying to save these rascals, then you will very much please Kṛṣṇa. The Vaiṣṇava's qualification is para-duḥkha-duḥkhī. He is unhappy seeing others' distress. This is a Vaiṣṇava." Śrīla Prabhupāda ended the intimate meeting by rising and leaving the room.

When Harikeśa mentioned that he was spending two-and-a-half hours to cook Śrīla Prabhupāda's lunch, Prabhupāda said, "You do not know how to cook. I will show you and do it in one hour."

"One hour?" said Harikeśa, almost in disbelief. "This is amazing!"

Prabhupāda then took off his shirt and entered the little kitchen of the Mississippi farm. While a crowd of devotees peered in through the open door, Prabhupāda looked at his wristwatch and announced, "It is now twelve o'clock."

He used the same three-tiered brass cooker he had brought to America in 1965. In the bottom section he put mung beans and water, in the middle section he put rice, and in the top he arranged various cut vegetables— squash, peas, potatoes, and cauliflower. Putting the cooker over a low flame, he then poured an inch of ghee into a frying pan and placed it over a flame. Next he cut up an eggplant, dipped the pieces into turmeric and salt, and began to fry them in the hot ghee. He mixed and kneaded dough and began rolling out capātis. Periodically he checked his wristwatch, and when forty-five minutes had passed, he took the cooker's top off and turned it upside down to use as a small frying pan. He put in ghee and cooked some bitter melon, then deftly added cumin, anise, chili, and asafoetida. He squeezed lemon on the steamed vegetables and, within a few minutes, had finished.

Śrīla Prabhupāda looked at his watch. "One hour," he said. "We have cooked nine preparations." He then left the kitchen while his servant prepared his plate. Prabhupāda said that everyone who had watched him cook should be given some of the prasādam.

About five in the afternoon, Prabhupāda toured the farm. In the barn he saw the calves taking milk.

"How are you using the bulls?" he asked.

Like a hesitant student, Nityananda replied, "To plow?"

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "to plow and transport. You have to engage more men for plowing. Two bulls may be used for each plow."

Passing by a hayfield, Prabhupāda asked why the cut hay still lay in the field. Nityānanda explained that he had to wait for it to dry after the rain. Prabhupāda warned that rain could spoil the hay; it should be harvested soon. Coming upon a three-acre plot of sugarcane, they walked up one row and entered deep into the cane patch, which stood several feet above their heads. Emerging on the other side, they came to the edge of a forest of pine.

"These jungles are natural arrangement," said Prabhupāda. "You cut the trees, make your home, and the balance of it you can make for fuel. Then the ground you can plow and grow your own food. That's all. It's natural." Prabhupāda lamented modern society's waste of trees by printing heaps of useless newspapers. He saw the two acres of fruit trees the devotees had planted—satsumas, peaches, pears, and figs—as well as the twenty-five large pecan trees.

But he discovered discrepancies. Nityānanda had lined up for Prabhupāda's inspection two tractors, a large forage harvester, a hay conditioner, hay mowers, rakes, a blower, and a wagon. But when Prabhupāda saw the machines standing in the open, he asked why they were not being kept under cover. Nityānanda replied that they were still building a shed.

"In the meantime it will be finished," said Prabhupāda. "By the time you finish your shed, they will be rusty and gradually become useless." He quoted a Hindi proverb and translated. " 'A woman was dressing to go to a fair, but when she was finally dressed, the fair was already finished.' " The devotees laughed, but Nityānanda was grave.

Prabhupāda continued: "Utilize these machines, otherwise, while they are in working order, sell them. But don't keep idle in this neglected way."

Nityānanda showed Prabhupāda where twenty-five acres of sorghum was growing. This grain was for the animals and when harvested would go into the silos.

"So everything is for the animals?" asked Prabhupāda. "Nothing for man?"

"The cows give us milk," explained Nityānanda.

"That's all?" asked Prabhupāda. "And you are not growing any food grains? Why?" Prabhupāda's instruction was clear. Just before the walk was over, he again asked Nityānanda, "What the oxen will do?"

"Plow the fields," Nityānanda replied, like a student having learned his lesson.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "that is wanted. Transport and plowing the fields. And unless our men are trained up in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they will think, 'What is the use of taking care of the cow? Better go to the city, earn money, and eat them.' "

This statement was similar to an instruction Prabhupāda had given in various temples after installing the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. If the devotees were not enthusiastic, he had warned, the Deity worship would deteriorate into mere ritual, until finally the devotees would resent the spiritual master's giving them such a burden. Likewise on the farms, if the devotees did not utilize the bulls in the natural way and if they did not use the milk properly, then eventually they would want to get rid of the animals. By conducting things as Prabhupāda had taught, however, the devotees, the cows, and the bulls would live cooperatively and happily and Kṛṣṇa would be pleased.

Although for years Śrīla Prabhupāda had given many practical instructions in other areas of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, this was one of the first times he had given so many practical directions on conducting varṇāśrama society. He felt satisfied and pleased to have seen such a promising Kṛṣṇa conscious farm community and, reentering the house, said he was ready to return to New Orleans. It had been a busy, productive day in the service of Kṛṣṇa, and tomorrow would be another.

* * *

Detroit

August 2, 1975

Alfred Ford, the great-grandson of Henry Ford, had become attracted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness through meeting some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples in Detroit and through reading Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. He had adopted the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, begun regularly chanting sixteen rounds, and was now Śrīla Prabhupāda's initiated disciple, Ambarīṣa. Today Ambarīṣa was at the airport, behind the wheel of a white Lincoln Continental limousine, waiting to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda. On seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda approach, Ambarīṣa got out of the driver's seat and offered obeisances. He opened the back door of the limousine for Śrīla Prabhupāda, shut it, and returned to his seat, just like a menial chauffeur.

"We devotees also have a car," said Prabhupāda as they drove away, "but we are going to the temple and distributing books with it. Anything can be used for Kṛṣṇa. Here is a rich man's son, Alfred Ford. We are giving him a little spiritual teaching, and he is happy."

Another of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Detroit disciples was Elisabeth Reuther, now Lekhaśravantī-devi dāsī, the daughter of labor leader Walter Reuther. Ambarīṣa told Prabhupāda that the Fords and the Reuthers had been enemies, but now two of their descendants were peacefully working together in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased with the humility of these two disciples, and while he gave them some special status, he did not dote on the fact that they were from such famous families. Ambarīṣa and Lekhaśravantī saw themselves as humble servants of the Vaiṣṇavas.

On the way to the temple, Prabhupāda's car passed a large, modern building displaying flags of many nations and a large sign: "World Headquarters, Ford." One of the devotees turned to Ambarīṣa and asked, "Is this where you work?"

From the back seat, Prabhupāda spoke up. “No, he is the proprietor.”

As they passed by a big urban redevelopment project, Prabhupāda asked, “What is this?”

“This is known as Detroit's Renaissance Center,” said Ambarīṣa.

“They will never have a Renaissance,” Prabhupāda replied.

The Detroit temple was located in an old brick house, with the temple room in the third-floor attic. The lease was soon due to run out, and Govardhana, the temple president, was looking for a new place. He showed Prabhupāda photos of likely buildings, one of them a mansion of the late auto industry millionaire Lawrence Fisher. The place was probably too expensive, Govardhana said, and was located in a bad neighborhood.

But Prabhupāda was interested. In fact, whatever the devotees cited as bad about the mansion, Prabhupāda would say was actually good, or at least could be easily rectified. As for the high crime rate in the area, he said, “You'll have nothing to fear. Just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and distribute prasādam. Invite all the neighborhood people, thieves, and rascals, to take prasādam and chant, and you won't have any thefts.”

Devotees emphasized that Detroit was the crime capital of the U.S. and that the poor slum area where the mansion was located was known for drug trafficking, robberies, and murders. But Śrīla Prabhupāda repeated that they should not be afraid. “I lived in the Bowery,” he said, and he described how the bums used to urinate on his front door and lie across the doorway. But when he would come to enter the building, they would get up and say, “Yes, sir. Come on, sir.”

“Get the place,” Prabhupāda said, “and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa there twenty-four hours a day. If a thief comes, we will say, “Yes, first take prasādam, and then take whatever you want.’ What do we have?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda went to see the mansion with Govardhana, Ambarīṣa, and several G.B.C. men. They were met by the owner and a lady who introduced herself as a real estate agent.

As the owner guided them on a tour, Prabhupāda came to like the estate even more. The palatial building was situated on four acres surrounded by a high stone wall. There were gardens and walkways, now in disrepair, as well as fountains and a swimming pool. Some of the devotees thought the place gaudy, with its extravagant 1920s decor, but Śrīla Prabhupāda saw the great potential.

As soon as he entered the vestibule and saw the ornate Italian tiles and marble archways, he began to smile. The group entered the lobby, its high ceiling covered with classically sculptured leaves, rosettes, and hand-painted plaster flowers. Next they entered the ballroom, with its marble floor and high, vaulted ceiling painted to resemble an early-evening blue sky with clouds and stars. Special lighting gave the effect of natural starlight. At one end of the hall, three marble arches exactly resembled the design Prabhupāda had given for the Deity altars in his temples. Three altars could be installed there and the ballroom made into a temple with very little renovation.

Prabhupāda did not comment to the owner on the ballroom's suitability, but to the devotees it was obvious.

The tour then proceeded to the boat well, an indoor water garage capable of holding several yachts. The boat well opened into a channel, which opened into the nearby Detroit River. Prabhupāda mentioned that the devotees could get a boat for their preaching.

As Prabhupāda and his entourage entered one gorgeous room after another, they saw the many carved stone columns, hand-painted floor and wall tiles from Italy and Greece, and ceilings ornamented with gold-leafed figures. Rare antique crystal chandeliers adorned many of the rooms. There were living rooms, library rooms, a dining room, a billiard room, a music room, two master bedrooms, other bedrooms—all extravaganzas. "Each room is worth the entire price," said Prabhupāda privately to the devotees.

The owner spoke of Mayan, Moorish, Spanish, Greek, and Italian influences, and pointed out that the two hand-carved spiral columns in the dining room were salvaged from an ancient European palace. Wherever Śrīla Prabhupāda looked, he saw opulence: an indoor marble fountain, a wall of iridescent tiles, hand-painted cornices. Even the large bathrooms were extraordinary, with glamorous imported tiles and gold-plated accents.

The introductory tour completed, Prabhupāda, his followers, the owner, and the real estate agent sat together at an umbrella-covered patio table by the swimming pool. Already Śrīla Prabhupāda had mentioned to his disciples that the owner should donate the building for ISKCON's missionary purposes, and he had told Brahmānanda Swami to make the request. Since the owner had not mentioned the price, Prabhupāda spoke up.

"So, we are beggars," he began. He was serious, and yet he spoke with an air of humor. Ambarīṣa and Upendra hid their faces in embarrassment. "We have no money," Prabhupāda continued boldly. "Therefore, we are asking you, please give us this building."

The owner glanced incredulously at his real estate agent and then laughed nervously. "It's out of the question," he said. "I can't do that."

The agent was also taken aback and upset. "He can't do that," she whispered.

"I can't give it to you," explained the owner, "because I have taken a loss in maintaining this property. So I have to make my money back. This property represents a major part of my income."

"Then," said Prabhupāda, "how much do you want?"

"Well," the man replied, "I have to get at least \$350,000."

None of the devotees dared say anything. Prabhupāda thought for a moment and then said, "We will give you \$300,000 cash."

"I'll have to think about it," the man replied.

The real estate agent got to her feet, saying that a transaction like this is usually not done straight to the owner. But Prabhupāda ignored her and spoke with the owner about how lovely the mansion was. Prabhupāda then got up and took a short walk in the garden with his men.

Govardhana asked Prabhupāda if he'd liked it, and Prabhupāda said, "Yes, who would not like such a building?"

"Ambarīṣa doesn't like it," said Govardhana.

"Oh?"

Ambarīṣa said he thought the mansion was mājā.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "but mājā is also Kṛṣṇa. We can use anything in Kṛṣṇa's service."

Leaving the garden path and returning to their cars, Prabhupāda asked Ambarīṣa, "So, is this possible?"

"Yes, Prabhupāda. This is possible."

As soon as they returned to the temple, Ambarīṣa and Lekhaśravantī conferred. Her inheritance was limited, but she was able to give \$125,000. Ambarīṣa had to come up with the balance.

The next day the owner came to see Śrīla Prabhupāda. The man was accompanied by two women, and they all appeared a little intoxicated. He had come to say that he accepted the offer. Prabhupāda smiled and reaffirmed his intention to buy.

Afterward, Śrīla Prabhupāda openly showed his blissfulness about the purchase. "Just see," he said, "I didn't have one penny, and yet I offered him \$300,000 cash. And now Kṛṣṇa has provided the money."

As Prabhupāda had told the estate owner, "I am a sannyāsī. I have no money." And after collecting \$300,000 from his disciples, he still had no money. Within a few days he left for Toronto, taking nothing for himself. Everything was Kṛṣṇa's, to be used in Kṛṣṇa's service.

Toronto

August 7, 1975

Despite a severe toothache and swollen jaw, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued with lectures, interviews, and his usual activities. He could not chew and took only pureed fruit. When asked if he would see a dentist, he told the devotees not to worry; he was used to difficulties.

The Toronto temple was a small, run-down building, and Prabhupāda was interested in helping the devotees relocate. All the real estate brokers they had approached had told them about a fabulous

church for sale downtown. The temple president, Viśvakarmā, had looked at the building, but the owners were asking almost half a million dollars, with a large down payment. When Prabhupāda went to see the church, he decided that somehow they must get it. If necessary he could send the total BBT collections for two months as a loan to the Toronto temple. Prabhupāda told them to offer \$300,000 cash, but when Uttamaśloka went, the church directors rejected the offer, saying they had already rejected an offer for much more.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not give up the idea of getting the church, however, and he mentioned it before a meeting of Indians. Near the end of the program, when the host begged Prabhupāda to return again to bless them, Prabhupāda took the opportunity to request all present to please help the devotees raise money to purchase the church. Once they had actually purchased it, he said, he would return to Toronto. Many of the gentlemen present promised to help.

* * *

Suddenly, Śrīla Prabhupāda's North American tour was interrupted. A telegram from Tejas in New Delhi announced that if Prabhupāda wanted an interview with Indira Gandhi, he would have to come at once. The telegram contained no details, and his secretary was unable to reach the Delhi temple by phone. But Prabhupāda didn't need to hear anything more. When an auspicious opportunity arose, he said, a devotee should act at once.

Harikeśa planned the trip so they could stop in Montreal overnight. From Montreal they would fly to Paris, where Prabhupāda could rest before going on to Delhi. As word of Prabhupāda's imminent departure spread, several devotees in Toronto tried to see Prabhupāda for last instructions about their projects. Rāmeśvara also phoned from Los Angeles, pressing Harikeśa to ask Prabhupāda a list of last-minute editorial questions regarding the Fifth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The questions, however, concerning the Bhāgavatam's explanation of the structure of the universe, Prabhupāda rejected as unintelligent. He ordered the BBT to simply print the books as they were.

Not only was the prospect of meeting with Prime Minister Gandhi prompting Prabhupāda's return to India, but so were his uncompleted projects, especially Hare Krishna Land in Bombay. Brahmānanda Swami said he thought Prabhupāda had been looking for such a chance to end his Western tour and get back into personally managing the projects in India. Prabhupāda had just dictated a letter to Surabhi in Vṛndāvana, expressing disappointment that things could not get done without him.

You are all simply writing letters to me. Without my personal presence there you cannot do anything. Simply correspondence. Anyway, be careful there is no underhanded dealing in this transaction [purchasing land]. It is very much risky, so be careful. Please send me a regular report of the Bombay construction. I am very much anxious and will be glad to receive your regular report.

Devotees in Boston, New Vrindaban, and New York received the news of Prabhupāda's sudden departure with shock—he would not be visiting their temples! And they felt the impact of the stark realization that Śrīla Prabhupāda could leave them at any moment. He was not obliged to stay with them, and they should not take his presence for granted. They had his instructions; this was

sufficient. Of course, important decisions still had to be made. In Boston the devotees had expected Prabhupāda to look at a new building with them; but based on his instruction, they could become responsible and carry out his will, even in his absence.

The devotees who had recently received Prabhupāda in their temples realized how valuable had been those moments. The personal association they had had should be relished, remembered, and acted upon. The book distributors already knew that their work was most important to Prabhupāda, and that was sufficient. The Press workers in Los Angeles weren't dependent on Prabhupāda's staying in America; they had their mission—seventeen books in two months—and they were working day and night.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's traveling in the U.S. and Canada had been exactly in the mood of a wandering sannyāsī. And he was showing his G.B.C. men that they should not simply sit behind desks and manage but should travel and preach. Traveling, Prabhupāda stressed, did not mean aimless wandering or pleasure-seeking. While traveling, the preacher had to do some substantial work for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness society. And that also Śrīla Prabhupāda had shown—at the Dallas Gurukula, the Mississippi farm, Ratha-yatra. In Detroit he had secured a mansion, and in Toronto he was praying for a wonderful church, to be financed by the Indians. In Chicago he had shown how to preach on contemporary issues like crime and women's liberation—without compromise. His disciples could not match or imitate him, but his example of selfless work on behalf of Kṛṣṇa should be their standard.

In spite of Prabhupāda's traveling to so many cities, most people in the United States did not recognize his position. Reporters would interview him, but their superficial stories in the newspapers drew little attention. To the press, Prabhupāda was just another celebrity in the constant parade of faces and events. As Lord Kṛṣṇa had predicted in Bhagavad-gītā, out of thousands of men, only one seeks perfection. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his tireless search for that one person out of thousands, had shown his enthusiasm and willingness to speak with whoever came to see him. And through Ratha-yātrā and other public festivals, he was offering millions a first taste of potent spiritual life. Even one moment's association with a pure devotee could save them from a most inauspicious fate in their next life.

Besides the hundreds of thousands who benefited incidentally, in each city a fortunate few felt their lives greatly affected by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Professor Thomas Hopkins in Philadelphia, Assemblyman John Porter in Chicago, a flight supervisor on the plane to San Francisco, an appreciative mother in Philadelphia, and many others—all understood that their meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda was special.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often cited a specific reason for his touring. "My duty," he had said in Berkeley, "is to see that my disciples, who have accepted me as guru, may not fall down. That is my anxiety." And as he had lovingly expressed it in Dallas, "I have got so many children and grandchildren, so I have come to see them." He was the spiritual father of his disciples, and every ISKCON center was his home.

While touring his movement in the West, Śrīla Prabhupāda had felt satisfied that it was growing stronger. Opposition was also growing, but he took that as another sign of ISKCON's authenticity.

His original plan was still intact, and on this tour he had been pursuing it. America had a chance of becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious—at least he and his disciples should try for that. If they succeeded, then the whole world could be uplifted by that transcendental influence.

Prabhupāda liked preaching in America. “Mostly my students are American,” he had said, “and they help me very kindly push on this movement.” But one man in the San Diego crowd had shouted back that he wanted more sex than was allowed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So Prabhupāda's estimation was that Americans had good hearts, but that for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness they were becoming completely confused, frustrated, and degraded.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had come first to America in 1965 to plant the seed of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That he had done. Now, with dozens of centers across the country and many others around the world, he was realizing that his ambitions were not going unfulfilled. He also accepted that to make Kṛṣṇa consciousness the dominant force in America and the world was something he might not see in his lifetime. “It is not one man's work,” he had said, and he asked everyone—Americans, Indians, and all world citizens—to take part in distributing Lord Caitanya's mercy.

Only a rare few came forward to help him, however, and he worked with them. Touring, therefore, was but another attempt at making his organization as strong as possible while it was within his power to do so. Actually, he was living for others, and he didn't think he would live much longer. He wanted to continue touring, building ISKCON, saving as many lost souls as possible. And he wanted to impress upon his sincere followers and upon others who would read his books that every human being should take up this same work and live for the benefit of others by distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

SPL 48: At Home in India

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

At Home in India

There were, of course, other reasons for Prabhupāda's returning to India besides meeting Indira Gandhi. His regular rhythm had become to alternate touring the West with staying in India. He was leading his movement by traveling from center to center, but for at least five years now, he had devoted more of his time to India.

His ambitious projects in Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana, although increasing the prestige of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, were by no means completed. And Hare Krishna Land in Bombay was still only a construction site. Unlike in America and Europe, where Śrīla Prabhupāda achieved his objectives by inspiring disciples to carry on the management, in India he was the manager. He had to be; otherwise his Western disciples would be cheated and become dispirited. Pressing managerial decisions, therefore, brought him frequently to India.

Moreover, he had a special inclination to be in India. He had a deep spiritual attraction to the holy dhāmas—Vṛndāvana was his home and Māyāpur was his place of worship—and he liked the unique opportunities for meeting and influencing people in places like Bombay. His upcoming meeting with India's chief executive was the kind of opportunity that came rarely in the West.

And in addition to all these reasons Prabhupāda also felt most relaxed and at home there. When breaking some of his commitments to visit more cities in the U.S., he had written to a disciple, “I was not able to come to Atlanta because I was called here to India on urgent business. Also I was feeling inconvenienced by so much traveling.” Prabhupāda often referred to New York, London, and Los Angeles as his special homes and to America as his fatherland. And when a disciple had once remarked that Prabhupāda would feel more at home in India, he had replied, “My only home is the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.” Nevertheless, for whatever reason or combination of reasons, Śrīla Prabhupāda was showing a definite preference for staying in India.

Prabhupāda was displeased to see how slowly the construction was progressing at Hare Krishna Land in Bombay. The monsoons had flooded the foundation, and what little work had been done appeared to be of poor quality. The whole project should have been finished in six months, Prabhupāda said, but he startled the devotees by saying, “At least complete it within my lifetime.”

Surabhi and Mūrti showed him drawings for other temples. An interested person in Nellore, near Hyderabad, was speaking of donating land, and the devotees had drawn up plans for a temple complex, complete with library and dormitories. Prabhupāda approved the plans. The temple buildings, he said, should be traditional, according to the śāstric directions, but the other buildings could incorporate more modern designs. He also studied and approved plans for temples in Hyderabad and Fiji.

Early the next morning, Śrīla Prabhupāda called for Surabhi and Mūrti and again went over their various plans with detailed interest. He had little time left before his meeting with the prime minister, however, and the next day he left for Delhi.

New Delhi

August 22, 1975

At 9:15 in the morning, Śrīla Prabhupāda and several of his leading disciples arrived at the prime minister's home, where they were confronted by a formidable security check. Two days before, the prime minister of Bangladesh had been assassinated, and Mrs. Gandhi was rumored to be next. Armed soldiers, therefore, surrounded her residence. The guards at the outer gate decided that the foreigners could not go in; Śrīla Prabhupāda alone could enter. While one guard opened the gate, another ushered Śrīla Prabhupāda into a car, which carried him to the prime minister's front door.

Meanwhile, the devotees waited in anxiety by the outer gate. Always some disciples would accompany Prabhupāda wherever he went; his disciples worried, almost like doting parents, that he might need their assistance.

In tiny, cramped handwriting, Śrīla Prabhupāda had noted down in a small address book a list of points he wanted to discuss with Mrs. Gandhi.

1. Grant immigration for 500 foreigners.
2. All M.P.'s initiated brahmanas.
3. Sanjaya the King.
4. Close slaughterhouses.
5. Chanting.
6. Meat-eaters—at home. No public meat eating.
7. Prostitution punishable.
8. No religious group except Bhagavad Gītā as it is.
9. All government officers must join kirtan at least twice a day.
10. Support Krishna consciousness all over the world.

The most pressing item was at the head of the list: Mrs. Gandhi should grant permanent visas to Prabhupāda's Western disciples in India. Just a few weeks before, some of the foreign devotees in Māyāpur had been asked to leave the country. For years Prabhupāda had been asking for permanent visas whenever he met governors, members of Parliament, or other men of influence. Devotees were constantly being asked to leave the country to renew their six-month visas. The travel costs incurred and the disruption of the devotees' services seriously hampered ISKCON's work in India; therefore, Prabhupāda wanted Indira Gandhi to sanction up to five hundred foreign disciples to stay permanently in India.

The other points on Śrīla Prabhupāda's list were scriptural directions for how the prime minister could make her leadership Kṛṣṇa conscious, in the spirit of the great rājārṣis of the Vedic age. These were the same tenets of God conscious leadership he preached wherever he went, and he had deep conviction that if the world's leaders would apply them, an era of peace, prosperity, and happiness would dawn. Indira Gandhi had a tendency toward authoritative control, so she should exercise it in terms of Vedic directions. Then her rule could become most effective and beneficial.

A government official opened the door to Śrīla Prabhupāda's car, ushered him into the house, and brought him before the prime minister. As Prabhupāda entered the room, Mrs. Gandhi stood up. Although she greeted him cordially and offered him a seat, he could immediately detect that she was distracted, fearful for her life. She openly admitted it, and added that this was not, therefore, a good time for their meeting. Prabhupāda felt that she would have preferred not to meet at all, but was allowing it only because she had promised. Her agreeing to see him, he felt, was an indication

that she had some attraction for spiritual life, but he understood that on this visit at least, he could not introduce the extensive advice he had been contemplating.

Mrs. Gandhi complimented Śrīla Prabhupāda on the work he was doing all over the world. "They are good boys," he replied, and he asked if she could arrange for permanent visas. She agreed, but again mentioned her present anxiety. They soon ended their talk, and Śrīla Prabhupāda left.

A few days later, while still in New Delhi, Śrīla Prabhupāda received a letter from Rāmeśvara. The BBT in Los Angeles was miraculously fulfilling Śrīla Prabhupāda's order to publish seventeen volumes in two months. The composers, editors, artists, and workers had ecstatically finished their marathon—on schedule! When the first books had come back from the printers and had been offered on the altar of Rukmīṇī-Dvārakādhiśa, the devotees had cried in transcendental bliss, chanting again and again the mantras to Śrīla Prabhupāda. They were feeling the potency of the order of their spiritual master and seeing themselves as instruments in carrying out what had once seemed an impossible request.

Today our composer finished the last volumes of Caitanya-caritāmṛta. By Wednesday next week, August 20th, all volumes will be at the printer. Now they are just starting to compose the Fifth Canto, and the entire canto will definitely be at the printer by Vyasa-puja day.

After promising delivery of books by October at the latest, the letter was signed by about sixty devotees: "Your unworthy servants at ISKCON Press." On their behalf, Rāmeśvara stated,

We have lost all desire to do anything except be engaged in producing and distributing your transcendental books by the millions in every town and village.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote back the next day from Delhi.

Regarding your desire for all twelve Cantos, you will get it, rest assured. Your so much ardent desire will be fulfilled by Krishna.

On August 21 Rāmeśvara sent Śrīla Prabhupāda a telegram.

BY THE MERCY OF LORD BALARAMA, NITYĀNANDA, THE LAST VOLUME OF CAITANYA-CARITAMRTA IS LEAVING TODAY FOR THE PRINTER. BY YOUR MERCY AND DIVINE ORDER IT IS DONE.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled on to Vṛndāvana, the devotees were able to dispatch advance copies of all fifteen volumes to him by his eightieth birthday on August 31. Just after Prabhupāda observed the ceremony in the temple, a devotee arrived in Vṛndāvana with the final six volumes of the Caitanya-caritāmṛta.

With great relish and satisfaction Śrīla Prabhupāda examined the books. He was pleased with the artwork and quickly became absorbed in reading the pastimes of Lord Caitanya. He felt so inspired he remarked to the devotees in Vṛndāvana that he was thinking of stopping all touring and just staying in Vṛndāvana and translating. The reciprocation of the devotees at ISKCON Press was so

sincere that it increased Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire to reciprocate with them. He wrote to “My dear Rāmeśvara and company,”

You have taken seriously the publishing and also the distribution of these books, and that is the success of our mission. You have taken seriously this work and I know that my Guru Maharaja is pleased with you because he wanted this. So by this endeavor you will all go back home, back to Godhead.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda had mentioned that he would like to sit in Vṛndāvana and simply translate Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, his stay there was characterized by intensive management, not by writing. He had presided over the grand opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir four months earlier, and now he would demonstrate how the temple should be run. The Krishna-Balaram Mandir was a Vedic temple complex at a famous holy place, and it was being scrutinized by persons already strongly opinionated on how a temple should be run.

Immediately Prabhupāda found discrepancies. In the guesthouse, which was for guests, not disciples, he found married disciples living with their children. This was not proper, he said, and these families would have to find other quarters nearby or leave Vṛndāvana. He also found problems with the plumbing, the municipal sewage system, the financial management, the Deity worship, the cleanliness, and the devotees' behavior.

Almost every area of temple life and every devotee required special attention. In the smallest discrepancies, Prabhupāda would sometimes see the essence of all problems, and he would instantly point it out. And because his disciples took his words with utmost seriousness, as coming directly from Kṛṣṇa, his reprimands were often devastating.

Prabhupāda was a difficult taskmaster. A Vaiṣṇava is said to be “as soft as a rose and as hard as a thunderbolt,” but Prabhupāda began showing more the thunderbolt side of his personality. Sometimes a neophyte's conception of the spiritual master is that he must always be peaceful and pleased with everything that happens, and that this is a sign of his being situated in transcendental consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, demonstrated many moods—including anger.

In its material form, anger (krodha) is described in Bhagavad-gītā as occurring when one's lust (kāma) cannot be fully satisfied. A true sādhu, therefore, because he does not have lusty desires, does not become possessed by anger.

The Vaiṣṇava poet Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, however, declares that anger may also be used in serving Kṛṣṇa. Narottama dāsa gives the example of Hanumān, the eternal servant of Lord Rāma, who displayed his great anger in fighting against Rāvaṇa and the other demoniac enemies of the Lord. Rūpa Gosvāmī also wrote in the Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu that a devotee should not tolerate blasphemy to Kṛṣṇa or to the Vaiṣṇavas and that his response might justifiably be transcendental anger. Even Lord Kṛṣṇa incited the anger of the nonviolent Arjuna, inducing him to fight. And that fighting was transcendental, whereas Arjuna's reluctance to fight was material.

Among sentimentalists and impersonalists, however, the image persists that a sādhu should never show anger. When, at a large paṇḍāl festival in Delhi, Śrīla Prabhupāda had shown anger toward a

man who spoke against Kṛṣṇa, many in the audience had misunderstood; some had even walked out.

Prabhupāda's disciples could accept his anger. They even welcomed it—theoretically. But to bear it was difficult. The spiritual master must cut through his student's false ego to engage that student in pure service. The guru's show of anger, therefore, is good for the disciple. According to Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, one should not be lenient with sons and disciples. Unless he deals strictly with them, he will spoil them.

Prabhupāda's anger in Vṛndāvana was not, however, a mere exercise in student training. He strongly desired to see the temple solidly established. He trusted that his disciples were sufficiently loyal to him to withstand the pain of chastisement and take it for what it was: mercy.

Prabhupāda was vigilant about the devotees' attendance at the morning devotional program in the temple. Calling for the temple president, he asked why some devotees were regularly absent. Maṅgala-arati, he said, was very important, and everyone must attend. Punctuality was also important. The exact time for the maṅgala-arati would vary according to the clock, he said, but it must always be one-and-a-half hours before sunrise.

Prabhupāda would take his morning walk, timing it so he would be back in the temple a few moments before the Deity doors were supposed to open for darśana. Once when he was waiting, with all the devotees gathered around, he looked at his watch and then asked Akṣayānanda Swami, "What is the time?" Aware that Śrīla Prabhupāda was speaking with exactitude, Akṣayānanda replied that it was thirty seconds after seven-thirty. Prabhupāda shook his head, and with a resigned look he said, "It is very difficult to be a brāhmaṇa—thirty seconds late. Why are they taking so long to dress the Deity?"

Akṣayānanda explained that the Deity dressing took about one-and-a-half hours.

"They are simply lazy," Prabhupāda replied.

"How long should it take, Śrīla Prabhupāda?"

"Half an hour at most."

Akṣayānanda was flabbergasted, since he knew of no pūjārī who could come even close to that. He remained silent.

"What is the difficulty?" Prabhupāda challenged. "Half an hour at most."

Shortly after Prabhupāda had arrived, he had noticed that the path leading to the front gate was not clean. He had complained strongly, "Why this is not clean? It should be cleaned by the time daybreak comes. I want to see this cleaned." The temple commander, a young Englishman from Australia named Hari-śauri, was supposed to supervise all the cleaning, but he had taken much of it for himself. After hearing Prabhupāda's remarks about the pathway, Hari-śauri had resolved to rectify the problem. Immediately after maṅgala-arati he would run out to the front of the temple,

throw water on the stone pathways, and madly run the large squeegee over the front steps and walkway, so that by the time Prabhupāda came by, most of the area would be sparkling clean. And by the time he would return from his walk, all the outdoor walkways would be clean. Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't say anything further about the walkway, which seemed to be a positive sign.

Getting the devotees to ring the bell in the temple dome on time was a major effort for Śrīla Prabhupāda, as was getting them to ring the bell in the temple hall at all. His desire was that the bell in the temple dome should sound the hour and ring once every half hour. The grounds watchman, or chaukīdār, was supposed to do it, and Guṇārṇava was to see that he did. But for weeks there were problems, especially during the hours of the night, when the chaukīdār tended to fall asleep.

For Śrīla Prabhupāda, the undependable bell ringing revealed much about the overall temple management in Vṛndāvana. He made it clear: "I am judging the management of this temple by the ringing of the bell." If the nightwatchman was sleeping, and if the temple leaders could not execute a simple order, how would the temple and guesthouse, with all their complexities, operate smoothly? Akṣayānanda Swami and Guṇārṇava sometimes thought that they would never solve the problem of the bells, especially since they already had so many other things to do.

But Śrīla Prabhupāda was relentless. Whenever the bell missed by even a few minutes he would demand to know what was wrong. During the night he was usually the only one not sleeping, but he would wake Akṣayānanda or others and reprimand them if the bell failed. One night at midnight he woke Harikeśa, his traveling secretary.

"Do you hear that?" demanded Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Harikeśa strained to hear. "I don't hear anything."

"You can't hear it?" repeated Prabhupāda.

"I'm sorry, but I can't hear anything."

"That's right! Go out there and wake up the chaukīdār, and make him ring the bell!"

Harikeśa went out into the darkness, woke the sleeping chaukīdār, got him to ring the bell, and then returned to sleep. And so did the chaukīdār.

At 12:30 Prabhupāda again rang.

"Did you hear it again?"

"No, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Harikeśa.

"So go out and wake him again!"

In addition to getting the temple dome bell to ring on time, getting both the bells to operate properly was also a problem. The bells were of heavy brass, worked by a rope. Prabhupāda wanted the bell in the temple to be rung constantly during the āraṭi kīrtanas. It took weeks for Guṇārṇava to arrange it.

And the bell in the temple dome was particularly difficult, since the rope rubbed on the stone walls and soon snapped. The thicker rope Guṇārṇava got simply spoiled the clarity of the chime and made the ringing uneven, which Prabhupāda immediately noticed. Guṇārṇava tried a chain—too heavy. A nylon rope—it broke. Materials were scarce in Vṛndāvana, and each change meant another delay, sometimes days. Nothing seemed to make the bell work properly.

Śrīla Prabhupāda told Guṇārṇava to try a pulley. Somehow Guṇārṇava couldn't surrender to that particular instruction. He thought the rope would just jump the track. One of the devotees did purchase a pulley, but Guṇārṇava said it was useless.

When Prabhupāda called Guṇārṇava to his room and demanded, "Where are the pulley wheels?" Guṇārṇava said he had sent them back. "You rascal!" Prabhupāda shouted. "I am asking for pulleys, and you are sending them back!"

Guṇārṇava apologized, ran out, and got a pulley. It didn't work. Then he got the idea of designing a bracket with a hole in it. The next morning Prabhupāda came out of his room and walked around to the front of the temple to check on the bell. For Guṇārṇava and others the whole affair was becoming unbearable.

"Let us hear the bell," said Prabhupāda.

Giving mighty tugs to the rope, a devotee rang the bell again and again.

"No, that's wrong," said Prabhupāda.

Guṇārṇava showed Prabhupāda the wooden bracket arrangement, and Prabhupāda thought it was a good idea. Guṇārṇava even tried to improve it by greasing the hole, and it worked for a while. But then the rope snapped again.

Prabhupāda's morning walks were usually filled with managerial and administrative talks, as he pointed out how the devotees could prevent being cheated, how they could save and collect money, how they could keep the temple clean, and so on. These talks were directed at specific individuals and were usually marked by criticism. Morning walks, therefore, were sometimes tense.

One morning Guṇārṇava invited Prabhupāda to see the new book display. In a sincere effort to please Prabhupāda, the devotees had set up a book display just inside the entrance to the temple. There were bookshelves with built-in lighting, a display case, and a counter for sales.

Showing off the book display was a triumph for the temple managers. The lights worked, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's books were neatly placed. The G.B.C. secretary for Vṛndāvana, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, was also present, telling Śrīla Prabhupāda that actually the temple was first class and that things were

now going smoothly. As Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, Akṣayānanda Swami, Guṇārṇava, and others pointed out the features of the book display, Śrīla Prabhupāda was silent, then suddenly agitated.

"You say that everything is first class," he said, "but I see that it is fifth class! Just see!" He banged his cane on the floor and then lifted it up, pointing. "I have come six thousand miles to tell you about a bird's nest." The assembled devotees all looked up to behold a large bird's nest within the chandelier. Birds were nesting there, amid the protruding straw. Yet until now, no one had noticed the dirty, unsightly presence.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had explained in his letters and books that one duty of a spiritual master is to expose the faults in his disciples—even if the fault is only slight. And the qualified disciple considers himself bereft of spiritual knowledge, always a fool before his spiritual master. He therefore considers the spiritual master's criticisms as mercy.

One day Śrīla Prabhupāda was meeting with the temple managers. He wanted practical ideas, not sentiments. He complained about overspending, in Vṛndāvana and now in Bombay also, where construction was just beginning. "You will squander money here," he said, "and Surabhi will squander money there. What is your plan to stop this? What will you do?" No one knew what to say. There was a long silence.

Finally Akṣayānanda spoke up. "We will become Kṛṣṇa conscious."

"An impractical suggestion!" Prabhupāda exclaimed.

Akṣayānanda Swami regularly expected the thunderbolt, but that didn't keep him from wanting to be with Śrīla Prabhupāda. On one morning walk Prabhupāda mentioned how the climate in Vṛndāvana was very harsh, both in summer and in winter. In winter, he said, the cold would sometimes be accompanied by rain.

"But Prabhupāda," said Akṣayānanda, "even if it rains stool and urine and pus and blood from the sky, still we should stay in Vṛndāvana?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave an almost impish smile and said, "Oh, you are expecting?" The devotees burst out laughing.

Another time Akṣayānanda Swami asked, "Is it true that it says in the śāstra that if you pass stool once a day you are a yogī, twice a day you are a bhogī [sense enjoyer], and three times a day you are a rogī [diseased person]?"

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, and he kept walking. After a while he added, "But don't try for passing stool once a day."

"Acchā," responded Akṣayānanda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled. "Do you think if you pass stool once a day that you are a yogī?"

Hari-śauri had had little personal association with his spiritual master. But one day in Vṛndāvana Prabhupāda asked to see him—to point out a serious discrepancy. As temple commander, Hari-śauri had asked an old man not to eat in front of the Deity in the temple. The old man had become upset, and a young Bengali man had defended him, shouting at Hari-śauri that he had no right to criticize anyone in the temple. Hari-śauri had attempted to ignore him, but the young Bengali had continued shouting and threatening to throw him out of the temple and cut off his śikhā. Finally Hari-śauri had twisted the young man's arm and had told the chaukidār to throw him out. Śrīla Prabhupāda soon heard of the incident and called for Hari-śauri.

"How inauspicious," Hari-śauri thought. "The first time my spiritual master has ever called for me, and it's over a bad incident like this."

Prabhupāda did not immediately reprimand him, but first asked for his version of what had happened. Hari-śauri appreciated the opportunity, and he began to tell the whole story. When he mentioned that the old man had asked to speak with an authority and that he had told him he was the temple commander, Śrīla Prabhupāda interrupted. "Hmmm." Prabhupāda gave his disciple a penetrating glance. "Temple commander does not mean commander-in-chief. Where have you heard this, about eating prasādam in front of the Deity?"

Hari-śauri could not remember an exact reference, and he became embarrassed. "Well, I thought I read it in one of your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said.

"Hmmm." Prabhupāda looked at him again. He could understand his disciple's ignorant mistake. Because of the boy's inexperience in India, he had not understood the serious implications of what he had done. Actually, because of the sensitive relationship between ISKCON devotees and the residents of Vṛndāvana, he should have tolerated the abuse. His was an ignorant mistake, but ignorance was no excuse.

"This is a great offense," said Prabhupāda. "He will go out and tell so many people that the foreigners have thrown him out. This is very bad."

Prabhupāda looked gravely at Hari-śauri. "Now you find out where this man is staying," he said, "and you bring him back here. Invite him to come back."

Hari-śauri tried his best, looking all day for the young Bengali man, who was reportedly staying at a hotel in Mathurā. He was unsuccessful, however. Disappointed, he returned to the temple, and as soon as he returned, a devotee came and told him Prabhupāda wanted to see him. "Oh, no," he thought. "Now Prabhupāda will really be angry."

Hari-śauri entered Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, which was filled with guests.

"This boy has come," said Prabhupāda, and as Hari-śauri looked around he saw the young Bengali man. The man smiled and said, "Hare Kṛṣṇa." They embraced and began to make apologies.

"So you give him this fruit," said Prabhupāda to Hari-śauri, indicating a basket of fruit sitting on the floor. He then dismissed them and continued preaching to the others in the room. The

disagreement was settled, but it had been Prabhupāda himself who had changed the young man's heart and rectified a volatile incident.

One of Prabhupāda's women disciples in Vṛndāvana who got the benefit of his criticisms was Daivī-śakti, who was responsible for cleaning Prabhupāda's quarters. Others helped her, but she was the supervisor. When Śrīla Prabhupāda noticed a glass that had not been polished, he asked who was doing the cleaning, and his servant replied, "Daivī-śakti."

"Oh, she must do everything?" Prabhupāda replied. It was far from being as heavy as some of his criticisms of the temple managers, but Daivī-śakti took it as an indication that she should become much more attentive to the details of her service.

Kiśorī-devī dāsī, the Deities' cook, inquired from Śrīla Prabhupāda about certain aspects of her service. Cook for Kṛṣṇa as for a young man with a big appetite, he advised her. Kṛṣṇa should get ten purīs, four capātīs, lots of rice, two samosās, two kachaurīs, two vaḍas, and two of each sweet. The cooked preparations should be served hot. "So now you have to teach everyone how to cook," he said. "You have to give everyone what you have received."

Kiśorī would also bring a garland for Śrīla Prabhupāda in the afternoon. To make it cooling, she would sprinkle it with water. For two days Prabhupāda said nothing, but on the third day he remarked, "Take this away. Why do you put water like that? It is very displeasing."

Viśāla had a practice, which other devotees considered eccentric, of standing at the gate and loudly reciting Sanskrit verses as Śrīla Prabhupāda passed. One morning Prabhupāda approached the gate in a thunderbolt mood, and as usual Viśāla came forward reciting verses.

"Why don't you do something useful?" Prabhupāda said. "Sweep this water away."

Śrīla Prabhupāda would sample the guesthouse cooking daily, often suggesting how to improve the quality. Each day Nava-yogendra would bring Prabhupāda a plate from the restaurant and then note down Prabhupāda's comment on each preparation. The following day the cooks would attempt to improve the food, based on Prabhupāda's remarks.

And so it was with each department. Even when riding in the car, Prabhupāda would ask, "You are having it oiled regularly? You are having it lubricated and serviced?"

Other temples were homes away from home, said Prabhupāda, but Vṛndāvana was home. Those who wished to live there with him, however, had to pass the test of his constant scrutiny and sharp criticism; they had to accept the hard work and austerity. And special austerities meant special blessings. When a devotee asked to be excused from his duties in Vṛndāvana to operate a farm in the West, Prabhupāda said that even opening twenty farms would not be as important as remaining in Vṛndāvana. Those who persevered eventually began to see all difficulties as nectar, as had been expressed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura: "When difficulties arise in service I find them sources of happiness."

On Rādhāṣṭamī Śrīla Prabhupāda laid the cornerstone for a large gurukula building adjacent to the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. He said that when it was built, the devotees should accommodate five hundred students there from all over the world. Through the gorgeous temple, the guesthouse, and soon the gurukula, Śrīla Prabhupāda intended to draw as many people as possible to the shelter of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. For this end he was willing to sacrifice everything, even his peaceful writing. And for this end he also demanded his disciples to sacrifice.

* * *

Constant travel, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, was becoming more and more inconvenient—one reason for his return to India. But he was by no means stopping; unless he traveled, his movement could not remain vital and healthy. So he was prepared, despite inconvenience, to continue touring. Disciples never stopped inviting him to travel, and recently Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Swami had asked him to come to South Africa. When Prabhupāda agreed, Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa had quickly arranged ten festivals and other engagements in Durban and Johannesburg, covering a period of three weeks in October.

Devotees on the predominantly Hindu island of Mauritius had also requested Prabhupāda to visit, mentioning that the prime minister wanted to meet him. Prabhupāda agreed. Leaving Vṛndāvana—making brief stops in Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Bombay—he was off to Africa.

Mauritius

October 1, 1975

Relieved of management, Prabhupāda was freer now to lecture to interested gatherings. Reception by the press and government ministers in Mauritius was good, but most public questions reflected a lack of sincere interest in spiritual knowledge: “Is it necessary to be a vegetarian?” “Is the soul locked in the third eye?” “You seem dogmatic. Is there any doubt in your philosophy?” Nevertheless, people were respectful and considered Śrīla Prabhupāda an important leader and spiritual authority. He remained there a week.

Durban

October 5

This was Prabhupāda's first visit to South Africa. For two years the devotees there had been trying to get him a visa, but the government was wary of foreign missionaries. The bureaucratic delays, therefore, had taken months. The devotees had even had to send copies of Prabhupāda's books for the government officials to review.

Every night for a week, Śrīla Prabhupāda delivered public lectures to crowds of at least a thousand—mostly Hindus, but also many whites. After Prabhupāda's lecture at the University of Durban, Westville, a member of the faculty tried to discredit the lecture by stating, “Well, this is just the Hindu concept.” Repeatedly Śrīla Prabhupāda tried explaining how the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness were universal and scientific, but the man kept replying that it was Hindu culture. Dr. S. P. Olivier, rector of the university, sympathized with Prabhupāda's presentation and stayed

afterward to speak at length with him. "I think you are quite right," Dr. Olivier began, "but very few people tonight got the point you were trying to make, that this is a scientific reality."

Johannesburg

October 12

Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival at the Johannesburg airport was culturally extraordinary for South Africa—white men bowing down before an Indian! The devotees had borrowed a yellow Mercedes-Benz and had parked it in a spot reserved for state ministers and other dignitaries. No one objected. As Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived, devotees threw flower petals, some young European onlookers bowed down, and the police—impressed by all the protocol—saluted Śrīla Prabhupāda and respectfully opened the door to his Mercedes.

As in Durban, Prabhupāda's lectures were well attended. He was keen to have his books sold during these programs, and he would go to the book booths and ask his disciples, "Are they buying the books?" He was concerned that the Europeans, not just the Hindus, buy the books.

Prabhupāda spoke strongly against racial discrimination, but unlike Mahatma Gandhi, who had been imprisoned in South Africa for his outspoken views, Prabhupāda spoke on the authority of scripture. "What is this black-white business?" he said. "It is nonsense. It is the bodily concept of life." In South Africa such statements would ordinarily have been considered volatile politics, yet everyone appreciated Śrīla Prabhupāda, because he spoke on a purely spiritual level.

One of Prabhupāda's disciples in South Africa, Ṛddha, asked privately how to deal with the racial issue in Johannesburg. The only solution, Prabhupāda said, was mass hari-nāma saṅkīrtana. When Ṛddha asked about starting a farm community, Prabhupāda replied, "Don't be so eager to move out to the country. The preaching is in the cities." He said he was very pleased with what his disciples had done in South Africa within such a short time.

While Prabhupāda was in Johannesburg, Rāmeśvara and company fulfilled their promise and reached him with copies of both volumes of the Fifth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Śrīla Prabhupāda took the books with him to his lecture at one university and quoted from them, speaking on Lord Rṣabhadeva's instructions, beginning with the verse in which Rṣabhadeva advises His sons not to live for sense gratification.

Mauritius

October 24

Prabhupāda had returned to meet with the prime minister. As a friendly gesture, the prime minister had sent a chauffeured car for Śrīla Prabhupāda's use in Mauritius. One day Prabhupāda was leaving to take a ride in the countryside, but as he was about to enter the car on the right side, Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Swami suggested, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, come to the other side. It's safer." And Prabhupāda complied. For half an hour they rode through the beautiful countryside, past sugarcane fields, mountains, and the ocean. At one point, they stopped and walked along a cliff beside the sea.

When they returned to the car, Brahmānanda Swami opened the right-side door and Prabhupāda said, "No, the other side is safer," just as Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa had previously suggested.

A few minutes later, as Prabhupāda's black Citroen was rounding a curve, a Volkswagen suddenly appeared, heading toward them in the same lane. Prabhupāda was seated behind Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, and Brahmānanda was seated behind the driver. The moment before the Volkswagen had appeared, Śrīla Prabhupāda had sat up, cross-legged, planting his cane against the floor of the car to support himself.

As the Volkswagen rushed toward them, the chauffeur braked, swerving to the left, but the Volkswagen swerved in the same direction. There was a head-on collision. Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa's head hit the windshield, cracking the glass. The driver's head also slammed against the glass, and his face was covered with blood.

In the back seat, Śrīla Prabhupāda remained sitting, his face set gravely. Brahmānanda, in shock, suddenly embraced Prabhupāda, as if to protect him, although the danger had already passed.

Brahmānanda then jumped out of the car to try and flag down a motorist, and Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa got out and opened the back door, where he found Śrīla Prabhupāda with his face bruised, his leg bleeding, and pieces of glass scattered at his feet. Prabhupāda didn't speak or indicate how he felt. Suddenly Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa realized that the car, disabled on a curve, was in a dangerous position, so he joined Brahmānanda in the road to caution motorists and to try to get someone to stop.

The Citroen and the Volkswagen were totaled, and the man and woman in the Volkswagen were both injured. Motorists soon stopped, and when the injured persons had received help, Prabhupāda and the devotees got into a car and rode back to the temple.

Harikeśa was waiting anxiously, wondering why Śrīla Prabhupāda was so late, when suddenly Prabhupāda entered, walking very stiffly, saying nothing. When Harikeśa saw all three were injured, he cried out, "My God! What happened? What happened?" But Śrīla Prabhupāda just walked to his quarters and sat down, silent. A devotee brought bandages for the obvious injuries: Prabhupāda's chin, hand, and leg, and Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa's and Brahmānanda's heads.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had said nothing since the accident. Finally he spoke: "Asann api kleśa-da āsa dehaḥ." And he translated: "As soon as you accept this material body, there are so many difficulties. We were sitting peacefully in the car, and the next moment—crash." He talked briefly about the collision, and Brahmānanda Swami told how just before the accident Prabhupāda had braced himself with his cane, preventing perhaps more serious injuries.

"Get some resin and turmeric," Prabhupāda said. "Mix it together with a bit of lye, and heat it." Prabhupāda was again speaking—Bhāgavata philosophy and practical medical remedies. It remained a frightening event, however, and Prabhupāda asked the devotees to have kīrtana. Kṛṣṇa had saved them, he said. Considering that both cars had been destroyed, the injuries were negligible.

Prabhupāda sat like a battle hero, anointed in three places with the yellow poultice, while Harikeśa read aloud from Caitanya-caritāmṛta—"The Disappearance of Haridāsa Ṭhākura."

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda began talking about the dangers of traveling, questioning the advisability of his extensive touring. His mission of translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and other Vaiṣṇava literature was too important for him to be risking his life traveling in automobiles. He had been considering a visit to Nairobi before returning to Bombay, but now he said he would cancel his visit. He said he had never wanted to leave Bombay, but because they had made so many arrangements in Africa, he had come. Perhaps the accident was a sign that he should go back to India.

The next morning, with Brahmānanda Swami and Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Swami hobbling along, Prabhupāda went on his morning walk as usual, although he favored his injured knee. Again he discussed with his disciples whether he should go on to Nairobi or return to India. Cyavana, the president of ISKCON Nairobi, argued that Prabhupāda should go to Nairobi. The devotees there were expecting it, he said, and they had made arrangements. If Prabhupāda canceled now, he would probably not come back for a long time. Others, however, argued that there was no question of asking Śrīla Prabhupāda to keep going now, after this traumatic accident; he should go directly to Bombay.

Prabhupāda heard both opinions, but he was more affected by the consideration of disappointing the devotees in Nairobi than of recuperating after the accident. He decided to go to Nairobi.

But after only a few days in Nairobi, Prabhupāda became anxious to return to India. Reports were reaching him about mismanagement in Bombay and about building materials being stolen from the property through a conspiracy involving the workers, the storekeeper, and the chaukīdārs. When Śrīla Prabhupāda heard this, he became so morose he stopped translating. He even stopped eating. Although thousands of miles from Bombay, he was feeling the pain more than any of the devotees there. Many of them, in fact, were not even aware that the theft was taking place. When Brahmānanda Swami asked Prabhupāda why he wasn't eating, he replied, "How can I eat when my money is being stolen?"

* * *

Bombay

November 1

Śrīla Prabhupāda's plane from Nairobi arrived in Bombay at one A.M., yet even at such an early hour he was greeted at the temple by a gathering of intimate life members, disciples, and even some of the tenants on the land. When the group followed him to his room, he confided that he had had a serious accident, and he even showed them the scar on his knee. He said he was relieved to be back. In a letter from Bombay he wrote,

The accident was very disastrous, but still Krishna saved... Perhaps I may stay here for some time for finishing our temple construction on this land.

ISKCON Bombay was Śrīla Prabhupāda's office, and he immediately got to work. He fired the engineer, whom he held responsible for the poor, slow work and stolen building materials. At first Prabhupāda had tried to avoid hiring a construction company by having Surabhi oversee the whole project, assigning work to various subcontractors. But that wasn't working.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted a change, but there was no clear alternative. "We have come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness for a life of eternal bliss," he said to Surabhi. "But instead of eternal bliss, I am suffering eternal anxiety." He appealed to Surabhi, Girirāja, and the others to do something.

One day a life member, a construction engineer, visited the site and told Śrīla Prabhupāda the temple and hotel could easily be completed in six months. Prabhupāda then berated Surabhi, who said that six months' time was not enough. "Now I am nowhere," thought Surabhi. "I'm losing my service."

Then another life member, Mr. Omkar Prakash Dir, the chief engineer with E.C.C., one of India's largest, most reputable construction companies, came to the Sunday feast and examined the work. Appalled at the poor quality, he said that after two or three years it would fall apart.

Girirāja, impressed with the idea of hiring Bombay's biggest, most competent construction firm, spoke with Prabhupāda, who was also interested. At first Surabhi resented that the work was being taken out of his hands, but after meeting with Mr. Dir, he also liked the proposed change.

The contract was made with E.C.C., and Mr. Dir presented a progress chart, detailing each phase of the work and showing when it would be completed. Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased with their professional methods, despite the higher cost. Now the work would be done as professionally and as quickly as possible, and this was what mattered most.

Prabhupāda stayed for the greater part of November, and the construction progressed quickly. There was no question of cutting corners to save a little money, Prabhupāda explained to Surabhi. The temple had to be a beautiful jewel, so that people from all over India would want to come and stay. During the Vṛndāvana construction Prabhupāda had emphasized, "Why so much? Why not just simple?" But now he was stressing, "Why not more?" The temple should be opulent and ornate, with marble everywhere. The hotel should be the finest, with beautifully furnished rooms and an elegant restaurant. And the air-conditioned theater building should be one of the best in Bombay.

"Why not marble on the floors?" asked Prabhupāda, speaking of the hotel rooms.

"It's going to be very expensive," said Surabhi.

"Don't worry about the money," Prabhupāda said. "Can we put marble on the floor? Then do it." Surabhi did it, but tried to save money by putting a cheaper stone in the hotel hallways. When Prabhupāda saw it, he was displeased. It should have been all marble, he said.

Funds for the Bombay construction came primarily from the sale of books in America, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was regularly receiving reports. On November 18, Rāmeśvara sent a telegram with some of the good news.

ONE MILLION COPIES OF BTG JUST PRINTED. DEVOTEES GONE WILD. PROMISED TO DISTRIBUTE ALL WITHIN ONE MONTH. SPANISH GITA JUST OFF THE PRESS BRINGING HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS TO YOUR LOTUS FEET. ALL POSSIBLE BY YOUR MERCY ONLY.

When the temple president from ISKCON Denver wrote asking about starting a jewelry business, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote back, disapproving.

Why are they doing business? This creates a bad atmosphere. We shall only do one business and that is book-selling. That's all. As soon as you become karmis after business, then spiritual life becomes damaged. This business should not be encouraged anymore. Doing business and not sankirtana, that is not at all good. Sankirtana is very good, but grhasthas under condition can do other business, only if they give at least 50 percent. But sankirtana is the best business.

Prabhupāda envisioned that book distribution could not only finance Bombay construction but could also support his even more ambitious plans for Māyāpur. Book distribution was good business, and it was the best preaching. It was Prabhupāda's formula—American money combined with India's spiritual culture—and he encouraged Rāmeśvara to motivate the saṅkīrtana in the U.S.A. in accordance with this principle.

America has the money, so this is cooperation between the blind men and lame men. It will make good relations between India and America. The next chance I have for meeting with Indira Gandhi I shall inform her about how much foreign exchange we are sending. After receiving your encouraging assurance that as book distribution increases, the amount BBT sends will also increase, we are now going to attempt a Kurukshetra project and the Jagannath Puri project. For the time being we are spending in India, but eventually we will spend everywhere. This will greatly enhance the Americans' spiritual position.

Always remain dependent on Guru and Krishna and your progress will always be assured.

SPL 49: India: Unifying ISKCON

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

India: Unifying ISKCON

During 1975 Śrīla Prabhupāda increasingly referred management problems to the G.B.C., specifically to the annual G.B.C. meeting in Māyāpur. From the beginning of ISKCON he had been saying, "It is not one man's work." He had created the Governing Body Commission to relieve himself of the staggering burden of personally managing his growing world organization. "Always remember," he had written to a G.B.C. member, "that you are one of the few leaders I have given this responsibility to... and your task is very great."

Prabhupāda saw the progress of his movement as a wonderfully successful phenomenon, proof of the direct mercy of Lord Caitanya upon his humble efforts. ISKCON was his service to his Guru Mahārāja, and now his disciples should maintain it and increase it as their service to their spiritual master. He said he wanted to see 108 flourishing temples before his departure from the world. Keeping those temples alive was to be the work of his sincere followers. He wrote to his G.B.C. representative for Australia,

All temples in Melbourne, London, Paris, Bombay, all are very nice. Everything is very bright and brilliant. The Deity is proof of the sincere service. It is the duty of the G.B.C. now to maintain this. Their duty is to enthuse them and maintain.

Problems were inevitable for a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Many sādhus, therefore, preferred to remain in a holy place, without preaching. But Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and the great ācāryas in the sampradāya of Lord Caitanya had been concerned with offering the Lord's devotional service to as many conditioned souls as possible.

Yet to take up this path one would have to be tolerant. Financial needs, national and local governmental restrictions, ignorant and demoniac enemies of pure devotion to the Lord, envy, personal ambition and disagreements among neophyte devotees, struggles and falldowns in the attempt to avoid illicit sex and intoxication—all these and many more problems complicated the preacher's mission. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, knew the struggle was worth it, even to save just one soul from the cycle of birth and death.

Prabhupāda wanted his more advanced disciples to share the struggle with him. And when he saw competence and sincerity in some of his senior members, he tried to turn affairs over to them and concentrate more on his life's mission of presenting all twelve cantos of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Always the devotees were enthusiastically pressing Prabhupāda to translate and write more books—so that they could read them and distribute them. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that he was trying his best, but that the task was not mechanical; great concentration and peace of mind were required. He could not write while at the same time being besieged by dozens of threatening, complicated issues.

When the G.B.C. member responsible for Gurukula wrote Śrīla Prabhupāda with a plan that all ISKCON centers should support the educational system, Prabhupāda replied, “As far as taxing the centers for the maintenance, that should be considered amongst the G.B.C.”

When a controversy arose in the Stockholm center and devotees appealed to Prabhupāda for a judgment, he replied, “This must be considered at a full meeting of the G.B.C.” And he added, “All of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that sexual attraction, making unnecessary changes, and fighting among Godbrothers were all Western “diseases.” Kṛṣṇa consciousness was the path of perfection, and if his disciples stayed persistently and sincerely on the path, they could certainly succeed.

Sometimes, however, Prabhupāda saw the Western diseases overcoming his disciples, and even the G.B.C. members would seem unable to stop it. Yet unless they spared him from such headaches,

how could he do the higher work? "G.B.C.," he said, "must mean that by his managing, there are not any complaints, so that I can be relieved to do the translation work."

He had expounded on this principle in the Fourth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

When the disciples are grown up and are able to preach, the spiritual master should retire and sit down in a solitary place to write and execute nirjana-bhajana. This means sitting silently in a solitary place and executing devotional service...

The devotees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness now render service as preachers in various parts of the world. Now they can allow their spiritual master to retire from active preaching work. In the last stage of the spiritual master's life, the devotees of the spiritual master should take preaching activities into their own hands.

But it was like trying to control the wind. When the difficulties mounted, the devotees would run to him like children running to their father. Sometimes a disciple would simultaneously ask him to write his books and then drop a serious problem in his lap. One of the leaders in America reported to him that some devotees were not following the principles, but that Śrīla Prabhupāda should please stay in India and continue writing peacefully. Prabhupāda wrote back,

If the old habits come back, then everything is finished. If my mind becomes disturbed in this way, then how can I concentrate on book writing? It is not possible. Better not inform me anything, and let me sit in Vrindaban.

Sometimes Śrīla Prabhupāda uttered the phrase "let me sit in Vṛn dāvana," as if to give up managing the whole problematic Society. Everyone knew he would never leave ISKCON; he had already sacrificed his life to save the world by leading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But when would his disciples mature? Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "I want that the G.B.C. relieve me of all management, which means they have to manage the way I manage." And often he would say, "Do as I am doing."

When controversies and disagreements among the G.B.C. secretaries themselves came before him, he would refer them to the G.B.C. body.

I appointed G.B.C. for peaceful management of affairs, and now you are creating disturbances among yourselves. So how can I be peaceful to translate my work? So all these things should be kept in abeyance for the time being, and when we meet in Mayapur we can discuss amongst the entire G.B.C. The Spiritual Sky questions and all other questions of this nature will simply have to wait until we discuss it in Mayapur.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to hold the G.B.C. responsible for settling the affairs of ISKCON. For better or worse, he wanted all his disciples to accept the G.B.C. as their authority, and he trusted that when the G.B.C. members all met together, working under his guidance, they could solve the problems. But whether they could actually spare him, allowing him to peacefully write his books, seemed doubtful.

During 1975, a controversy arose among some of the ISKCON members, including some of the G.B.C. members, as to whether gr̥hastha devotees, married men, could actually be spiritual leaders in ISKCON. Although the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy clearly explained that any devotee, regardless of his āśrama, could become qualified and purified, the controversy grew.

In September a sannyāsī G.B.C. member flew from the U.S. to Vṛndāvana just to suggest to Prabhupāda that another G.B.C. member, a gr̥hastha, was not qualified to lead. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, said the matter could be settled at the annual G.B.C. meeting. But when the next day a letter came from Rāmeśvara, supplicating Prabhupāda to continue his translating work, Prabhupāda replied that he was prepared to work at his writing but that when one leader flies ten thousand miles to lodge a complaint against another, then, "What can I do?"

If you all leaders cannot work together, then how can you expect the others to cooperate with you? Differences may be there, but still you have to cooperate together, otherwise where is the question of my being relieved of so many problems and decisions?

As the third annual international festival approached, the longstanding problems of various discontented parties awaited settlement in the court of the G.B.C. Śrīla Prabhupāda would be arriving in Māyāpur on January 17, almost two months before the G.B.C. meetings and the gathering of devotees. With perhaps a thousand devotees attending, there would be blissful kīrtanas, classes, and parikramas. And there would be problems. Prabhupāda made it clear that the proper way of settling the controversies was not by gossiping about them, not by pressing him for a ruling, but by trusting in the G.B.C. Prabhupāda himself would stand by the decisions of the G.B.C. or, if necessary, correct them, and so sincere followers should also not hesitate to follow.

At the Mayapur meeting, whatever we have decided, that is good for one year. So if anything has to be done it will be decided by majority decision of the G.B.C. I do not wish to give any decision without the GBC's verdict. My only grievance is that I appointed G.B.C. to give me relief from the management, but, on the contrary, complaints and counter-complaints are coming to me. Then how my brain can be peaceful? So best thing is that we wait for the Mayapur meeting and decide there combinedly what to do. If there are any discrepancies that will be discussed at the G.B.C. meeting in Mayapur. How can one man manage the whole world affairs?

January 17, 1976

Enroute from Calcutta to Māyāpur, Prabhupāda stopped at the mango grove and took breakfast—fruit, vaḍa, nuts, and sweets. Even before reaching Māyāpur, he was enjoying the peaceful atmosphere of the Bengal countryside. Soon he would be at the Māyāpur Chandrodāya Mandir, his special place of worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

More than fifty adult devotees and thirty young Bengali gurukula boys were waiting for Śrīla Prabhupāda at the gate. For the first time, Prabhupāda beheld the large entrance dome, recently built over the gate. A thick, twenty-foot flower garland stretched across the gateway, and before it stood Bhavānanda Goswami, holding a small silk cushion on which rested a pair of scissors. Stepping out of the car into the bright sunlight, Prabhupāda took the scissors and cut the garland,

sanctifying the gate. Prabhupāda smiled. Everyone cheered as the gate swung open and Prabhupāda entered, followed by the ecstatic kīrtana party.

As Prabhupāda walked toward the temple of Rādhā-Mādhava, everywhere he looked he saw blossoming flowers. Clay pots of burning frankincense billowed fragrant smoke, and women stood on the second-floor veranda offering showers of rose petals as Prabhupāda approached. The main building was decorated beautifully. Walking beneath an orange silk umbrella amid the devotees and exuberant kīrtana of the holy name, he appeared regal and triumphant.

Inside the temple, where dozens of garlands hung from the ceiling, Prabhupāda came before the golden forms of Rādhā-Mādhava and offered prostrated obeisances. He felt he was in Vaikuṇṭha. Because of the arrangements the devotees had made, he said, Kṛṣṇa was smiling.

Later that day, as Prabhupāda was taking his massage, his servant Hari-śauri suggested that this would be a good place for retirement. "Either Vṛndāvana or Māyāpur," Prabhupāda replied. "No other place. That is sure."

In the afternoon Prabhupāda inspected the grounds and buildings. He was pleased at the spaciousness of the prasādam hall, built to seat twelve hundred, and he remarked that its size reminded him of the Bombay railway station. But when he found the steps to the kitchen dirty, he criticized strongly. One of the devotees explained that it was usually cleaned but that the devotee who always did it was chanting his japa. "You are chanting japa," said Prabhupāda, "and it has not been cleaned for three hundred years. Clean first, then japa. Under the plea of japa they are simply dozing." He said that anyone who finds a situation affected by the mode of ignorance but doesn't act to correct it is also being affected by the mode of ignorance.

Śrīla Prabhupāda walked down to the bank of the Jalāngī to see the boat the devotees were using for traveling from village to village. Onboard, he praised the simple life of traveling and preaching. He also went to the gośālā and saw the calves and cows, and he drank a cup of the first sugarcane juice of the season, from cane grown on the ISKCON land.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda walked through the fields to the proposed site of the Māyāpur city, Surabhi described where various buildings could be located. Prabhupāda suggested they present their plan to West Bengal government officials and ask them to provide the necessary land.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to meditate on the Māyāpur city, and a few days later he composed a letter to the chief secretary of West Bengal, asking for help in acquiring land. ISKCON should not be misunderstood as a sectarian religious institution, he informed the chief secretary. Kṛṣṇa's instructions in Bhagavad-gītā, beginning with "We are not the body," were scientific and thus did not belong to any particular religion. Prabhupāda also asserted that ISKCON programs, especially the one contemplated for Māyāpur, would solve national and international problems through spiritual education. He mentioned features that would be particularly appealing to the chief secretary, such as the investment of foreign capital in the project, the flow of tourists who would come to Māyāpur, and the hiring of thousands of local workers for constructing and maintaining the city. His description of the project was fascinating.

Centered around a cultural exposition building, the total village-communal development will unfold. This central exposition building is the first phase of a many-phased plan. It will feature the world's largest planetarium, entitled "The Temple of Understanding." This structure will be over thirty stories high and will house exhibits depicting all the levels of universal existence and all varieties of living conditions, and all the planetary systems and exact detail through lights, models, dioramas and murals. There will also be daily scheduled exhibits and tours for the public, and even a moving escalator taking the public to the upper levels of the exhibition building. The planetarium's exhibits on the various levels of existence in this world and beyond will be based on the scientific findings in the Vedic literatures, especially the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. This "Temple of Understanding" shall be surrounded by beautiful pathways, entrances, gardens and water reservoirs. Four-storied buildings, one thousand feet long, will stand at the perimeter of the central area on all four sides. These will be used for teaching general and specialized branches of education from primary level to post-graduate level.

In his letter Śrīla Prabhupāda referred to difficulties in purchasing land for ISKCON's projects, since all the local landowners were escalating their prices far beyond the market value. If the government could make the land available at market prices, then ISKCON could immediately start its important work, officially inaugurating it on the birthday anniversary of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, March 16, 1976.

In the meantime, Prabhupāda was trying on his own to acquire enough land to begin. The Māyāpur City project would require extensive funding and many years of work to develop, but it would proclaim the glories of Lord Caitanya with unlimited potency. Māyāpur would become famous, drawing people from all over the world to see the unique, modern application of timeless Vedic wisdom.

Prabhupāda explained to his disciples that although a sannyāsī traditionally does not involve himself with money, the devotee's desire is to unite Lakṣmī (the goddess of fortune, represented by wealth) with Nārāyaṇa (God). He said there was truth to the common saying "No one listens to a poor man," and were he to advertise A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami discoursing in an empty field in Māyāpur, no one would come. Westerners especially should be able to hear about Kṛṣṇa in a comfortable, attractive setting. Prabhupāda planned, therefore, that visitors to ISKCON's transcendental city be well accommodated. Gradually, the world would be deeply affected by the dynamic demonstration of the artistic, philosophical, and humanitarian aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda asked Surabhi to draw a master plan for Māyāpur City. Staying up all night, Surabhi made a preliminary architectural sketch, showing specific areas of the city for brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras. The sketch also showed temples, schools, streets, walkways, residential buildings, cottages, a stadium and an airport, as well as self-sufficiency features like windmills, irrigation systems, and agricultural fields.

Prabhupāda was taking his massage when Surabhi brought him the drawing. Prabhupāda's golden body was glistening with mustard oil as Hari-śauri carefully, strongly massaged his head, back, chest, and limbs. Prabhupāda was relaxed and silent, his eyes closed in meditation. But when Surabhi entered with the drawing of Māyāpur, he became animated. Prabhupāda liked the drawing

and talked about it for an hour. Now Surabhi should make a formal drawing and approach professional architects and appropriate government agencies. The devotees coming to Māyāpur should also see it. As fabulous and far-reaching as it was, the Māyāpur City should now become a reality.

As the festival drew near, some of the sannyāsīs arrived, hoping to associate more intimately with Śrīla Prabhupāda before the flood of devotees began. A major topic of discussion among the sannyāsīs was the controversy over the role of gr̥hastha men in ISKCON and the influence of women and children on the sannyāsīs and brahmacārīs, those in the renounced orders. Some of the sannyāsīs were suggesting that ISKCON should be more structured, to separate the renounced orders and the preachers from the householders. They began airing their views before Śrīla Prabhupāda, who then guided them. On one morning walk, Jayapatāka Swami inquired about the standards required before a man could take sannyāsa.

"To become sannyāsī," Prabhupāda replied, "the other three processes are there—to become brahmacārī, to become gr̥hastha, and to become vānaprastha. Stage by stage. But if one is able, he can take sannyāsa. And that competency is also very simple. If you become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious, then you can immediately become competent—brahma-bhūyāya kalpate. As soon as you fully engage yourself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then immediately you become more than a sannyāsī."

Hari-śauri, a gr̥hastha, inquired whether artificially accepting the renounced order could actually be indulging in another form of sense gratification.

"As soon as we manufacture something," Prabhupāda replied, "that is sense gratification. When we think, 'I want to fulfill my desire, that's all,' that is sense gratification. It may be that I sit down under a tree or I sit down in a palace—the basic principle is sense gratification. The other day I was talking about hīrā-cora and kīrā-corā. Hīrā means 'diamond,' and kīrā means 'cucumber.' One is thinking, 'I shall steal one cucumber,' and another thinks, 'If I steal, I shall steal the diamond.' But the stealing propensity is there. One may think that 'I am only stealing a cucumber, and it is not very dangerous,' but in the eyes of the law both of them are criminal. So if we manufacture a concoction—"Yes, I have got a stealing propensity, but I'll not steal a diamond, I'll steal kīrā"—that is only mental concoction. But he is a thief."

Jayapatāka Swami: "So is gr̥hastha life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness allowing us to steal kīrā?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, kīrā-corā. The prostitute hunter is hīrā-corā, and the householder is kīrā-corā. That's all."

Again Hari-śauri inquired whether artificial renunciation was sense gratification. There were different views among the disciples, and they wanted Prabhupāda to make it very clear, so that one party could not take a quote from Prabhupāda and claim it was universal.

"Renunciation is not artificial," said Prabhupāda. "It is a process. We have to give up this sense gratification. So go through a process to turn. Like sometimes in a health club there is artificial swimming, is it not? Artificial swimming is not actual swimming, but it is to practice."

Dayānanda: "But sometimes people who renounce, they become very proud. What is that?"

Prabhupāda continued to reply that renunciation had to be actually practiced. "Everyone must attend the maṅgala-ārati," he said. "One must attend this. Otherwise, no prasādam. If you are too sick, then also you should not eat. There should not be sleeping at the time of maṅgala-ārati because he says he's sick, then at the time of prasādam, voracious eating."

If the devotees were looking for Prabhupāda to make an absolute distinction between grhastha and sannyāsī, it was not there. He emphasized, rather, the actual quality and the practice of the individual devotee.

On another morning walk Hṛdayānanda Goswami told Prabhupāda of the sannyāsīs' discussions.

Hṛdayānanda: "We were thinking that it would be nice to have the city centers for the preachers. And for the women and children, it's much easier to maintain them on our farms. There they can do a little work and produce their own food."

Prabhupāda: "Yes. In the farms they can live and do some handwork."

Gurukṛpā Swami: "They won't do it, though, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Prabhupāda: "Then you don't allow. If they do not follow the rules and regulations, then what is the use?"

Another sannyāsī said that when many householders came together in big communities, an atmosphere of laziness developed, whereas when lots of brahmacārīs were preaching together, it was more enlivening

Prabhupāda: "Anyway, everyone should be engaged. That's all. No idle life. Never encourage laziness. If we maintain some lazy men, then everything will be spoiled."

Devotee: "I heard, Śrīla Prabhupāda, that you remarked our Society is not a love-making Society, but these things are going on."

Referring to an impropriety of two of his disciples, Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, I have seen in Vṛndāvana."

Other complaints arose. One leader argued that the temple should not have to carry the burden of maintaining women with children but no husbands. Another complaint was that brahmacārīs, by selling books, were in effect supporting the householders.

Prabhupāda continued to reply in a philosophical and practical way that whatever discrepancies were present should be rectified. Sense gratification, laziness, and failure to attend the temple programs should not be tolerated. But this condemnation of malpractices in devotional service did not fall exclusively on any particular group.

Shortly after his arrival in Māyāpur, Prabhupāda had addressed a similar issue in his own correspondence. A Mr. Chatterji had written from Calcutta to say that he was preaching worship of Lord Caitanya and was eager to show Śrīla Prabhupāda some articles he had written. Mr. Chatterji stated, "My theme is we can get to see our God, Gaurāṅga, by taking sannyāsa. Those who are grhasthas reach to the Godhead through nam sankirtana." Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged the man with a reply.

Your theme is okay. There were many devotees of Lord Chaitanya like Advaita Acharya, and even Lord Nityananda who were grihasthas. Lord Chaitanya left His grihastha life. It is a matter of understanding Krishna—that is the real qualification. Whether one is grihastha or sannyāsi, how well he knows Krishna. Śrīla Narottama das Thakur has sung "grhe va vane ta 'thake, he gaurāṅga bole dake."* Lord Chaitanya says "Kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya, yei krishna tattva vetta, sei guru haya."* So please come and we shall discuss your articles.

While sitting relaxed in his room, Śrīla Prabhupāda had his temporary secretary, Dayānanda, read him some recent mail. One letter was from a temple president having difficulty managing the devotees, and Prabhupāda had Dayānanda summarize the letter's points.

"He says," said Dayānanda, "that the devotees aren't behaving, and so he's criticizing. But they're not accepting."

"Simply criticism is not our means," said Prabhupāda. "Our means is to show by example." Dayānanda made a note of it to use in typing Prabhupāda's reply.

"Now, Śrīla Prabhupāda," Dayānanda continued, "he's inquiring about his household life."

"This is not the business of the guru," said Prabhupāda "—how to increase sex life and family life. They are not happy, these Western men and women. They become married, but they are not happy. Therefore I recommend brahmācārya and sannyāsa life."

Several other devotees were also in the room with Prabhupāda, and Jagad-guru, a brahmācārī, spoke up. "Because they have no training, that's why they have so many problems."

"Whatever it may be," said Prabhupāda. "But they are not happy. Therefore I recommend brahmācārya and sannyāsa."

Śrīla Prabhupāda had already been disturbed by what he saw as a loose husband-wife situation in Vṛndāvana. Now, hearing this letter from a householder who was improperly inquiring about his family life, he again turned his attention to Vṛndāvana and asked to see his G.B.C. for Vṛndāvana, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, who had recently arrived in Māyāpur.

"It is not a free hotel for love-making," Prabhupāda began, even before Gopāla Kṛṣṇa entered the room. "Vṛndāvana is not a joking place. They must be serious for Kṛṣṇa, and I shall give them everything. Don't worry about money, but manage. There is not scarcity of money. There is scarcity of management. Why so many children in the temple? It is not simply a place for husbandless women. Children should always be engaged, so they shouldn't create a disturbance all over."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that if the mothers were irresponsible and only wanted to take care of their own children, then they should be sent away from Vṛndāvana. Two women could run a nursery and take care of many children, and the other women could work. "Not go to the roof and lovemaking," said Prabhupāda, "and make a plan and go away." He stressed that since all India came to Vṛndāvana, ISKCON's center should be ideal in every respect. Otherwise, people would think that his disciples were hippies, and no one would come. A good example of responsible care for children was in Māyāpur, where a gurukula had already been organized.

"Children are welcome," said Prabhupāda, "but make them jewels. Not spoiled children, varṇa-saṅkara hippies."

For the sannyāsīs in Māyāpur, Prabhupāda's heavy words about irresponsible gr̥hastha life fueled their own arguments. A few of them felt that gr̥hasthas should not even live in the temples. That evening, when the sannyāsīs gathered in Prabhupāda's room, they discussed with him the position of families and children in ISKCON.

One sannyāsī reported not being allowed to preach in certain temples, because he was against marriage and favored brahmacārī life. Others complained that expensive properties were being purchased to be used mostly as residences. The preaching was suffering, they said, and brahmacārīs were being told to get married if they felt sexually agitated.

Prabhupāda felt the heavy force of the sannyāsīs' protest, and he could perceive the antagonism between the āśramas. These things must be decided by the G.B.C., he said, and no one could go against their decisions. But he also expressed sympathy for what the sannyāsīs were saying. Families, he suggested, could serve in farm communities and live self-sufficiently in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"Our whole preaching program is detachment from material life," said Prabhupāda, "to stop sex life altogether. Gr̥hastha is a concession for those who cannot give it up immediately. Otherwise marriage is not required. It is simply burdensome. Legal or illegal, the after-effects of sex simply mean difficulty."

March 7

The G.B.C. members assembled. The process was to make an agenda, discuss each issue, and then pass resolutions by voting. At the end of the day they would go to Śrīla Prabhupāda in his room and read the day's resolutions for his approval or amendment. The first day they spent mostly in assigning zones and duties for each G.B.C. member. They reported these results to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he approved them.

Prabhupāda also addressed the issue of gr̥hastha and sannyāsa life, saying that all the devotees should become attached to Kṛṣṇa's family, not to the "stool" family or "pig" family. Sannyāsa life meant rejection of the false family, but not the family of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness society was based on renunciation, said Prabhupāda, and therefore all sincere devotees were as good as sannyāsīs. The actual dress didn't matter, whether white or saffron,*

although an ideal grhastha should eventually come to the stage of formal sannyāsa. He said that all his disciples should become gurus and each make thousands of disciples, just as he had, thus spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere.

“Discuss in the G.B.C.,” he said, “and make a decision. Question and put to vote. But if you make brahmacārī party, grhastha party, sannyāsī party, it will be finished. Everything should be done very openly. We have to work for Kṛṣṇa. Why this pss-pss whispering? It is not very good.”

The next morning while Śrīla Prabhupāda was on his walk around the Māyāpur fields, the G.B.C. vice-chairman, Madhudviṣa Swami, asked for guidance in preparation for the G.B.C. meeting that day.

Madhudviṣa: “The subjects that we are going to be discussing today in the G.B.C. meeting are about the role of sannyāsīs and brahmacārīs and grhasthas in ISKCON. In the Eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā, in one of your purports, you say that a sannyāsī should never discourage a young man from getting married. But on the other hand, we understand that a sannyāsī should encourage young men to remain brahmacārī. So it seems to me like there's some kind of contradiction.”

Prabhupāda: “According to time and circumstance. Just like Kṛṣṇa says, *niyataṁ kuru karma tvam: 'Always be engaged in your prescribed work.'* And at last He says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja.** So now you adjust. That is not a contradiction. It is just suitable to the time and circumstance.”*

Madhudviṣa: “But is there some conclusion?”

Prabhupāda: “The real aim is that you have to become the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Either you go through karma or jñāna or yoga, it doesn't matter. The ultimate aim is how to reach Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna achieved the favor of Kṛṣṇa by fighting and killing. Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

Prabhupāda said no more. He had created the G.B.C. to deal with just such problems, and he had instructed his G.B.C. men personally, in letters and in his books. Now they would have to apply those instructions according to time and place.

The G.B.C. met, discussed all day, and by evening had a list of resolutions pertaining to the divisions of āśrama in ISKCON: Husbandless women with children could not live in ISKCON temples. Husband and wife could not live in ISKCON temples, even if separately. Before entering marriage, devotees should have a means of supporting themselves and not expect to “live off” ISKCON. Upon getting married, a householder would be financially responsible for his wife until such time as he took sannyāsa.

Reading the resolutions to Prabhupāda in his room usually evoked little verbal response from him. His practice was generally to nod in approval, or occasionally to comment. But when he heard the resolution that husbandless women with children could not stay in the temples, he uttered a thoughtful “Hmmm.” Then he said, “As for me, my only concern is that they shall not waste their valuable human life.” He was speaking not in the tone of the official head of the society, who could veto resolutions, but in a very personal, humble way, as a pure devotee. “After so much struggle,”

he said, "they have got this human form, and I do not want that they should miss the opportunity. As for me, I cannot discriminate—man, woman, child, rich, poor, educated, or foolish. Let them all come, and let them take Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so that they will not waste their human life."

Although the G.B.C. members usually had plenty to say, after these remarks from Prabhupāda they remained silent.

Finally, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, the elected G.B.C. chairman for the year, spoke. "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said. "So we will strike that resolution."

Prabhupāda also disapproved the resolution that a householder would have to give financial support for his wife for the rest of his life until he took sannyāsa.

"You each be guru," he said. "As I have five thousand disciples or ten thousand, so you have ten thousand each. In this way, create branches and branches of the Caitanya tree. But you have to be spiritually strong. This means chanting your rounds and following the four rules. It is not an artificial show. It is not a material thing. Chant and follow the four rules and pray to Kṛṣṇa in helplessness. We have to have enthusiasm. If we lose our enthusiasm, everything will become slack. In old age I came out from Vṛndāvana. I had no money, nothing. But I thought, 'Let me try.' "

Bhagavān spoke out spontaneously: "You're still enthusiastic, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"Yes." Prabhupāda smiled. "I am enthusiastic. I don't think I am an old man."

"Sometimes we think we are old," said Bhagavān.

"No one is old," said Prabhupāda. "Na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.* Sometimes in old age one is pushed down. But I am enthusiastic."

Prabhupāda said he was pleased at most of the resolutions, because they indicated that a strong G.B.C. was now ready to relieve him so he could concentrate on his translation work. He said that the devotees would have to strictly follow for the entire year what the G.B.C. had agreed on. There should be no changes unless he approved, and at the next annual meeting they could make any changes necessary.

The G.B.C. chairman then called for a vote on an unresolved topic from the day's meeting. The topic had been discussed, but since it had not been approved, the chairman called for a vote. Everyone voted yes by raising their right hand. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda raised his hand also. His disciples immediately laughed at this endearing gesture.

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "I am simply following the G.B.C. Whatever you say, I have to follow."

When the temple presidents heard about the G.B.C. resolutions, many objected. They knew Prabhupāda had approved them, but they thought that the actual spirit and interpretation some of the sannyāsīs might give to the resolutions would cause a split in the Society. Many of the temple presidents, being gr̥hasthas, felt discriminated against. They wanted a chance to present their side.

Prabhupāda knew of the presidents' discontent, and he brought up the subject on his next morning walk. Surrounded by sannyāsīs, G.B.C. men, temple presidents, and others, he brought out the issues, attempting to bring his spiritual family into harmony.

"I have heard," he said, "that too much stricture on the gr̥hasthas may cause some disturbance. Hmmm?"

"Yes," admitted Madhudviṣa.

"So," said Prabhupāda, "I think the gr̥hasthas themselves should form a small committee and define what they will do, instead of forcing something on them. Because in this age, nobody can follow strictly all the strictures in the śāstras."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa objected to the idea of gr̥hasthas revising the G.B.C. resolutions. "In none of our resolutions," he argued, "do we say anything about how the gr̥hasthas should live. The resolutions simply say how our Society should be run. It doesn't say how gr̥hasthas should live. And on points of objection, Prabhupāda has already corrected us."

"I think it may be further decided," Prabhupāda continued. "Make a small committee of three or four gr̥hasthas. Then you define how you live."

Changing the subject, Prabhupāda asked when the paṇḍāl was going to be built. Today 350 devotees were expected to arrive from the West. The paṇḍāl stage was supposed to have been erected, and festivities, including theater, would begin in the evening. But the devotees, irrepressibly absorbed in the gr̥hastha-sannyāsī issue, could not refrain from pursuing it further.

"That is the distinction between the enjoying spirit and the renouncing spirit?" asked Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Swami, returning to the theme.

"Hmmm?" Prabhupāda asked. Although the question was pointed, he remained poised, and detached from their party divisions. His idea of what to do was definite, but his method of teaching it was careful and gradual. He already knew well the difficult task of satisfying divergent views among his strong-minded disciples. For years he had been making the ultimate decisions and teaching his disciples how to go forward in a united way. Once again, an issue was building that only he could solve—if they would listen.

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: "For example, as we have been discussing, there are different tendencies between the brahmacārīs and the gr̥hasthas. The attitude of the brahmacārīs is toward renunciation. If a brahmacārī gives up his brahmacārī life to become a gr̥hastha, that means he is more inclined to the enjoying spirit. At least to some extent. So how to deal with this situation?"

Prabhupāda: "If you want to enjoy, who can stop you?"

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "But we cannot support it. We cannot support his enjoyment. That he should take on himself."

Prabhupāda: "According to different positions and attitudes, the four āśramas are there—brahmacārī, grhastha, vānaprastha, sannyāsa. This means that everyone is not on the equal platform. There are different platforms. But the whole idea is how to give up the propensity of enjoyment. That is wanted."

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: "We find in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam that Śukadeva Gosvāmī would approach the householders in the morning just so long as to give them a little bit of spiritual knowledge, and he would accept the offering of some milk. So the sannyāsīs and renunciants, generally they wouldn't very much relish the association of householders because of this enjoying spirit and the association that it entails. So we are finding also within our Society that those who are inclined to remaining celibate, they are finding the association of persons even within our movement who have this enjoying spirit to be somewhat detrimental to their own spiritual life."

Prabhupāda: "Then what is your proposal? You should drive them away?"

Madhudviṣa: "Unless there is association, then they will never become purified."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "No, that is not the problem, because everyone comes together for association. They come together in the temple for kīrtana, for lectures, for prasādam... These things are common activities. There's no question that we should not have common activities between all the āśramas. But for living there must be separate arrangement."

Prabhupāda: "Now, even in the temple, you are complaining that a husband and wife are talking."

Prabhupāda seemed almost coy in the way he gradually led and manipulated the issue. He was also hearing more clearly the minds and hearts of his divided disciples.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "Yes, they are not talking Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam."

Prabhupāda: "That you will find everywhere."

Bhāgavata: "There's a complaint that sometimes is made that there's too much aversion on the part of the brahmacārīs. But isn't that a quality of a brahmacārī, that he should have a healthy contempt for sense gratification?"

Prabhupāda: "I do not follow."

The devotees crowded around as closely as possible. This was an important point.

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: "He's saying that sometimes the brahmacārīs and even the sannyāsīs may have a strong aversion to association with women and householder life. But sometimes the grhasthas will criticize the sannyāsīs and brahmacārīs and say, 'This is fanaticism.' The grhasthas say that this is just as bad as the enjoying spirit, because a sannyāsī is meditating on the same thing, except that he's averse to it. So Bhāgavata dāsa's question is, 'Is it better to be neutral or to be averse?' "

Prabhupāda: “These are all fanaticism. Real unity is in advancing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva... In the Kali-yuga you cannot strictly follow, neither I can strictly follow. If I criticize you, if you criticize me, then we go far away from our real life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: “So is it correct to say that if we are not Kṛṣṇa conscious, then if it's not the gr̥hastha problem it would be some other problem?”

Prabhupāda: “Yes. We should always remember that either gr̥hastha or brahmacārī or sannyāsī, nobody can strictly follow all the rules and regulations. In the Kali-yuga it is not possible. If I simply find fault with you, and if you find fault with me, then it will be factional, and our real business will be hampered. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu has recommended that hari-nāma, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, should be very rigidly performed, which is common for everyone—gr̥hastha, vānapra stha, and sannyāsa. They should always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, then everything will be adjusted. Otherwise, it is impossible to advance. We shall be complicated with the details only. This is called niyamāgraha. I think I have explained it.”

Madhudvisa: “Yes, in The Nectar of Instruction.”

Prabhupāda: “Niyamāgraha is not good. Niyama means ‘regulative principles,’ and āgraha means ‘not to accept.’ Agraha means the opposite —too eager to accept the regulative principles, but no advancement spiritually. Both of them are called niyamāgraha. So the basic principle is that niyamāgraha is not recommended. If we advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by the simple method of chanting twenty-four hours—kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ—then things will be automatically adjusted.

“You cannot find in Kali-yuga that everything is being done very correctly to the point; that is very difficult. Just like our poet Allen Ginsberg, he was always accusing me, ‘Swamiji, you are very conservative and strict.’ Actually I told him, ‘I am never strict. Neither I am conservative. If I become conservative, then I cannot live here for a moment.’ So I am not at all conservative. I was living with one boy, Carl Yeargens. I was cooking, and I saw in the refrigerator some pieces of meat for his cat. So still I kept my food in that refrigerator. What can be done?”

They had been talking for over an hour, and Prabhupāda had given definitive instructions. But it was not over yet. It was clear, however, who was in control.

Later that morning, 350 devotees approached the precincts of Māyāpur in a caravan of buses from the Calcutta airport. For most of the arriving devotees, this would be their first visit to Māyāpur, and their excitement countered the fatigue of the long journey from the West. Free of worldly concerns, they had come to India to visit Śrīdhāma Māyāpur and to see Śrīla Prabhupāda again.

After three hours on the road, the buses had entered Māyāpur, and soon the devotees were seeing the Gaudiya Math temples, the Śrīvāsa Aṅgana, the samādhi of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and the birthsite of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, all appearing one after the other, as the buses, horns blaring almost incessantly, veered around the winding turns of Bhaktisiddhānta Road. Villagers on foot and in rickshas, buffalo, goats, and cows moved hurriedly aside. Local residents looked up with curiosity and surprise at the sight of hundreds of Western bhaktas arriving to celebrate Gaurā-pūrṇimā.

Then the arriving devotees saw, on the flat Māyāpur landscape, the pinkish hue and beautiful features of ISKCON's Māyāpur Chandrodaya Mandir, the place Śrīla Prabhupāda had prepared for them, the home of which they had heard so much. As the buses arrived at the gate to the ISKCON property, the devotees cheered to see the new domes and fields of flowers. And their eagerness to see Śrīla Prabhupāda increased. There would be formalities of registering and receiving a room, a few complications in locating and settling in, but nothing major. They were home now among fellow devotees. Soon they would be able to bathe in the Ganges and to hear the schedule for parikramas to the holy places.

Some devotees rested, while others met with friends from various places in the world. They shared the latest news and received experienced advice about the Ganges' swift current and about avoiding dysentery and mosquitoes. By early evening they had all moved into their rooms and taken prasādam. The śāhnāi musicians, in a small room above the entrance gate, began playing an evening rāga. The sky darkened, and devotees began gathering in the brightly-lit temple room for a gigantic kīrtana.

These devotees had been working very hard in various cities throughout the world, and coming to Māyāpur was like a reward for their austerities and patient service. Now they could relax and enjoy spiritual life, with no responsibilities other than to worship the Deities, to see and hear Śrīla Prabhupāda, to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and to simply be Kṛṣṇa conscious in the eternal abode of Lord Caitanya.

When Prabhupāda heard that now almost six hundred devotees were gathered in his Māyāpur place of worship, he was very pleased. He inquired whether the prasādam and accommodations were sufficient and whether there would be a full schedule of engagements for everyone. Otherwise, he said, if the devotees remained idle, they would get sick or would gossip. He said everyone should simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, go on parikrama and engage in kṛṣṇa-kathā.

Some of the new arrivals, especially temple presidents, were drawn into the schism regarding gr̥hasthas and sannyāsīs. Now that all the temple presidents were together, they called for a special meeting, rallying together in their discontent. They disliked the resolutions restricting the place of gr̥hasthas in ISKCON, and as they spoke and compared opinions, they found a particular focus for their grievances. Most of the objections were coming from the North American temple presidents and were aimed at the Rādhā-Dāmodara traveling saṅkīrtana party, led by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami. The conflict had been building for at least a year, ever since Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had formed the Rādhā-Dāmodara party. Within that year, the party had grown to about 150 men traveling all over North America and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

Prabhupāda had praised the party, which was responsible for thirty to forty percent of the total remittances to the American BBT. Men on the Rādhā-Dāmodara party lived with spiritually advanced sannyāsīs; they developed traits of austerity and detachment and had an enthusiasm for remaining celibate, without a need for marriage.

The Rādhā-Dāmodara party broke all records for book distribution and outdid all other zones and temples. An elite army of saṅkīrtana soldiers, they were the recognized world leaders of book

distribution. More than eighty members of the party had arrived at the Māyāpur festival, and they were given a special reserved section in the best building for their residence.

But in their zealousness for renunciation and saṅkīrtana leadership, some of the Rādhā-Dāmodara brahmacārīs had developed a condescending attitude toward temple life and householders. This materialistic conception had reached the point where some men were judging the worth of a devotee on the basis of whether he wore white cloth (as a gr̥hastha) or saffron (as a sannyāsī or brahmacārī). Anyone in white could not be a spiritually advanced devotee. At least, this was the misconception that the temple presidents felt had developed among some of the more immature members of the Rādhā-Dāmodara party.

The greatest grievance, however, was more practical than philosophical. The presidents claimed that the Rādhā-Dāmodara party was stealing men from the temples. The temple presidents compared stories and cited numerous instances to prove that men had been lured from their services in the temples to join the Rādhā-Dāmodara party. The philosophy that sannyāsīs were superior to gr̥hasthas, the presidents said, was being used in an opportunistic way to convince men—the very best brahmacārīs—to give up their posts in Prabhupāda's temple and join the Rādhā-Dāmodara group. This often caused serious difficulties.

The temple presidents considered the preaching of the Rādhā-Dāmodara party to be unbalanced and selfishly motivated. So acute had the disagreement grown that some temples had forbidden the Rādhā-Dāmodara party to visit, and some had banned Rādhā-Dāmodara sannyāsīs from lecturing to the devotees. The Rādhā-Dāmodara men, however, saw these restrictions as further proof of the householders' small-mindedness and attachment.

Śrīla Prabhupāda bided his time on the volatile issue and went about his duties, receiving guests and supervising the management of the Māyāpur temple and the festival. He was lecturing daily in the temple and satisfying everyone. To his servants and secretaries, however, he revealed that the schism was causing him anxiety. That the temple presidents were angry disturbed him. One afternoon, he could not even take his nap because of worry.

"This is a very serious thing," he said to Hari-śauri during the massage "—this difference of sannyāsa and gr̥hastha. Everything will be spoiled."

Hari-śauri compared the present schism to the schism that had destroyed the Gaudiya Math.

Another time, when sitting in his room, Prabhupāda picked up a decorative bookmark a brahmacārīṇī had made for him. "Such nice service," he said. "How can it be refused? I have never stopped them serving simply because they are women."

Rāmeśvara came to Prabhupāda's room and showed him some of the recent BBT publications. They discussed their business, turning at last to the sannyāsī-gr̥hastha issue. As Rāmeśvara began to offer his opinion, Prabhupāda asked that other available sannyāsīs and G.B.C. men come in for the discussion.

Rāmeśvara was championing the temples' cause, relating some of the financial and practical problems the temples were experiencing due to losing men to the Rādhā-Dāmodara party. When men left, then book distribution declined in those temples. In the face of the heavy propaganda for joining the traveling bus parties, how could the loyal temple devotees remain satisfied collecting money mostly for maintaining the temples, without being able to afford to distribute books? The temple devotees also wanted to have the ecstasy of book distribution, but that was becoming increasingly difficult due to the crippling tactics of the traveling bus parties. Rāmeśvara asked Śrīla Prabhupāda to clarify the philosophical misconception that gr̥hasthas were not advanced enough to manage the brahmacārīs.

Prabhupāda mentioned the sannyāsī Choṭa Haridāsa, whom Lord Chaitanya had rejected for only slight association with a woman. Yet Lord Chaitanya had embraced a gr̥hastha, Śivānanda Sena, on learning that Śivānanda Sena's wife was pregnant. Prabhupāda said that although Lord Chaitanya's relationship with His sannyāsīs was different than His relationship with His gr̥hasthas both were transcendental. The gr̥hasthas were encouraged to perform family duties and raise Kṛṣṇa conscious children.

Addressing the sannyāsīs present, Prabhupāda said that for them to be dwelling so much on the activities of the householders was inappropriate. It meant that the sannyāsīs were thinking about sex more than the householders were. If the sannyāsīs were thinking all day long about married life, they would become contaminated.

Prabhupāda then told a story to illustrate his point. Once two brāhmaṇas were about to cross a river when a lady appeared, in need of assistance in crossing. So one of the brāhmaṇas offered to carry her on his back. The other brāhmaṇa was shocked, but refrained from saying anything. After crossing the river, the lady thanked them very much and went her way. The two brāhmaṇas continued walking, but for hours the other brāhmaṇa continued to talk about the incident. "You let that woman climb on your back and touch your body," he said, and he continued talking. Finally the other brāhmaṇa corrected him: "I carried her on my back for ten minutes, but you've been carrying her on your mind for three hours!"

The temple presidents selected Jayādvaita, a brahmacārī expert in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy, to present their case before Śrīla Prabhupāda. Some of the G.B.C. members holding the same views also went, and since much of the opposition was against the Rādhā-Dāmodara party, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami also came, to defend his party. The many members of the Rādhā-Dāmodara party, who had come to Māyāpur looking for spiritual bliss after a year of demanding saṅkīrtana service, were hearing themselves criticized and wanted to retaliate. The jubilant, spiritual atmosphere of the festival was threatened by a political rift.

Jayādvaita explained to Prabhupāda that the temple presidents felt the propaganda that gr̥hasthas were incompetent to lead brahmacārīs was actually just a device. The real issue was men and money. By telling the temple brahmacārīs not to work under gr̥hasthas, the Rādhā-Dāmodara sannyāsīs were able to lure the men from their authorized services in the temples.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa agreed that if such false ideas were circulating, then they should be stopped, but he maintained that his party was not actually perpetrating such a philosophy.

@footnote = * “Regardless of social status, anyone who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is qualified to become a spiritual master.” (Cc. Madhya 8.128)

Prabhupāda said that a brahmacārī generally assisted a sannyāsī, and a sannyāsī was a preacher. The gr̥hastha is also the appropriate man to take care of the temple. If a brahmacārī wanted to travel with a sannyāsī, therefore, that was all right. “But if he has a responsibility,” said Prabhupāda, “he must stay.” The real point, he said, was that the devotees should all think of themselves as servants of the six Gosvāmīs. The whole problem before them was caused by “forgetting we are servant of Kṛṣṇa.”

“It is not that a particular service is especially for a gr̥hastha or a sannyāsī,” Prabhupāda continued. “He must be kṛṣṇa-dāsa. A servant's service is judged by the results. Why this party and that party? Yei kṛṣṇa tattva-vettā, sei “guru' haya. Bhaktivinoda was a gr̥hastha. Bhaktisiddhānta was a sannyāsī. Is one better than the other? No. So there should not be threatening. We are now worldwide organization.”

Prabhupāda repeatedly quoted the verse kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya/yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei “guru' haya, thus dispelling the contention that āśrama determines the quality of a devotee. Whoever knows the science of Kṛṣṇa, whoever is fully engaged in the service of Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda stressed, that person is a pure devotee.

A sannyāsī, Prabhupāda said, could preach, but he could also manage. A gr̥hastha could manage but could also preach. Although Prabhupāda had already brought up these points, now he was settling the issue completely. This discrimination, he said, must stop. It was not Kṛṣṇa conscious. And the G.B.C. should remove all resolutions discriminating against gr̥hasthas.

Prabhupāda emphasized that the real standard was to be kṛṣṇa-dāsa, the servant of Kṛṣṇa. In that surrendered mood, a devotee should be expert and willing to do whatever service was needed. He gave the example that some fifty years ago, when he had been the manager in Bose's laboratory in Calcutta, the workers had gone on strike. To the remaining workers he had said, “Come on, let's pack.” They had accepted the menial labor, and the strike had been ended. Similarly, whatever capacity of service was required, a devotee should do it. “We must be very stubborn servant of Kṛṣṇa,” Prabhupāda said.

Prabhupāda pointed out that he was probably the first bona fide sannyāsī to arrange for his disciples' marriages. Certainly he did not encourage disobeying the regulative principles, he said, but the real business was Kṛṣṇa's service. If that included arranging for marriages, then it should be done. “But generally the division is that the sannyāsī is fully engaged in preaching,” he said. “And the sannyāsīs' preaching should not be checked. Whoever is in charge of something, let him remain. If there is some discrepancy, try to correct it. In every rumor there is a grain of truth.”

Prabhupāda was not only defining and settling the immediate quarrels, but he was elevating all the devotees to the level of dedicated and inspired Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was not siding with one party or watering down the philosophy to make peace. He was appealing to his disciples'

intelligence. And more than that, he was entering their hearts and making them satisfied and truly desirous of working with one another.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped speaking, he asked for a response. Jayādvaita said he thought the presidents would be completely satisfied with Prabhupāda's decisions. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said that the G.B.C. would also be satisfied and that everyone, by Prabhupāda's grace, could now go forward with the right understanding.

The devotees then left Prabhupāda's room in a joyful mood, prepared to join the others and take part in an uplifting, nonpolitical Gaura-pūrṇimā festival.

The next morning Prabhupāda went for his walk on the roof of the Māyāpur building. As soon as he began circumambulating on the roof, at least two dozen devotees, mostly temple presidents and sannyāsīs, joined him.

The temple presidents felt victorious. Their positions were vindicated, and the misunderstandings of the philosophy had been straightened out. Now everything was proper. The whole affair had increased the devotees' faith in Prabhupāda and in the wisdom of following his order without false prestige.

As they walked, Pañcadraviḍa Swami, in a mood of humorous relief to the tension of the past days, began questioning Prabhupāda in an odd way.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "there is one thing I don't understand. In the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, that story of Sākṣī-Gopāla—the Deity who came to witness for the young brāhmaṇa? So the young man was serving the old brāhmaṇa, and then the old brāhmaṇa promised the hand of his daughter in marriage, and then the Deity came to bear witness. So if he was such a pure devotee, why did he call the Deity to come such a great distance just so he could become married? Why didn't he want to remain single? And why did he make the Deity come just for his marriage?"

It was not only the words but the way Pañcadraviḍa said them, jesting in the role of an overly-critical sannyāsī. And Prabhupāda immediately entered the joking spirit: "We are not against marriage. We are against illicit sex. But because no woman would have you, now you are saying that no one should marry. Just see the psychology here."

The devotees began to laugh wildly.

"This is the sour grapes philosophy," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Because no woman will have you, nobody wants you, therefore you are feeling this rejection and thinking that nobody should get married."

On the morning of Gaura-pūrṇimā, the appearance day of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Prabhupāda lectured on a Bhāgavatam verse spoken by Prahlāda Mahārāja to Lord Nṛsimhadeva. The verse (Bhāg. 7.9.38) indirectly refers to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's appearance.

In this way, my Lord, You have appeared in different incarnations, as human beings, as animals, as a great saintly person, as demigods and as a fish and a tortoise. In this way you maintain the whole creation and different planetary systems and kill the demoniac principles in every age. My Lord, therefore, protect the principles of religion. In the age of Kali You do not assert Yourself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore You are known as Tri-yuga, or the Lord who appears in three yugas.

Seated comfortably on his vyāsāsana, Śrīla Prabhupāda looked out over his reading spectacles at the long hall full of seated disciples. Two devotees fanned him with big cāmara whisks. The many glass chandeliers sparkled. At the opposite end of the hall stood the forms of Rādhā-Mādhava and Lord Caitanya.

“So here is a very specific statement about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu,” said Prabhupāda. “He is avatāra. Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the same Supreme Personality of Godhead, but He is channa. Channa means covered, not directly. Because He has appeared as a devotee.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained why the Supreme Lord appeared in Kali-yuga as a devotee. “When Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared, He ordered everyone to ‘Surrender to Me.’ But they took it, ‘Who is this person asking like that? What right does he have? Why shall I give up?’ But God Himself, the Supreme Being, He must order. That is God. But we think otherwise: ‘Who is this man? Why is he ordering? Why shall I give up?’ ”

The whole process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is submission, surrender to Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained. But the way to surrender to Kṛṣṇa is to submit to His devotee, His representative.

“So Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared this day for giving mercy to the fallen souls who are so foolish they cannot take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He is personally teaching them. That is this kīrtana.”

Later that morning Prabhupāda came down to the temple room again, this time to perform initiations. Fifteen devotees were receiving brahminical initiation, twenty-five were receiving first initiation, and seven men were receiving sannyāsa. Again Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted the verse that had become a theme for the festival: kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya: “Either he is a gr̥hastha or a sannyāsī, it doesn't matter. He must become a guru. How? Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā. One who knows the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one who understands Kṛṣṇa, he can become a guru. Guru is the post given to the sannyāsīs and to the brāhmaṇas. Without becoming a brāhmaṇas nobody can become a sannyāsī, and the sannyāsī is supposed to be the guru of both all the āśramas and all the varṇas. So, for preaching work we require so many sannyāsīs. People are suffering all over the world for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda cautioned the young men to live as very strict sannyāsīs. He also stressed that all his disciples should be training to become qualified as gurus. He quoted, “Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa. Anywhere, either you are in this district or that district, it doesn't matter. Either you are at home or outside home, it doesn't matter. You become a guru—everyone. “How shall I become guru? I have no qualification.’ Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that you don't require any qualification. You simply require one qualification, that you repeat the instruction of Bhagavad-gītā,

that's all. Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa. You become a guru. Don't adulterate kṛṣṇa-upadeśa like a rascal or nonsense. Present it as it is—Bhagavad-gītā. Then you can become a guru. You can become a guru in your family, you can become a guru in your society, your nation—wherever you are. And if it is possible, you go outside and preach this mission of Bhagavad-gītā. Therefore our movement's name is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whatever Kṛṣṇa says, you accept and preach. You become guru."

On Gaura-pūrṇimā day everyone fasted until moonrise, and most of the devotees walked down to the Ganges to bathe. Jayapatāka Swami told them that, according to śāstra, whoever bathed in the Ganges at Māyāpur during Gaura-pūrṇimā would become liberated from birth and death. In the early evening, pilgrims began arriving in great numbers. From all over West Bengal, people yearly visited the temples in Māyāpur, especially the birthsite of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and more recently ISKCON's Māyāpur Chandrodāya Mandir.

In Calcutta, people had seen the billboards advertising the ISKCON Gaura-pūrṇimā festival, and by word of mouth tens of thousands of villagers had heard about the longest building in West Bengal and the "golden" Deity of Rādhā-Mādhava. Devotees greeted the guests with prasādam and sold copies of Gītār gān, Śrīla Prabhupāda's Bengali versification of Bhagavad-gītā.

By nighttime long streams of people were flowing in and out of the front gates. The crowds raised a cloud of dust, and the air filled with sounds of ricksha bells, women singing, friends talking, and the amplified kīrtana emanating from the temple. Most of the visitors walked through the temple, visited the photo exhibit, and then stayed for a while, watching the kīrtana or the theater performance at the outdoor paṇḍāl stage. Although the number of visitors approached a hundred thousand, the scene remained peaceful, as people moved along without pushing or hurrying, observing the customary respect of visiting a holy place.

Dhruvanātha: The most ecstatic highlight of the festival was when, after greeting the Deities in the morning, Śrīla Prabhupāda would circumambulate the temple. There was a bell on either side of the Deity room, and as we circumambulated and Prabhupāda came to the bells, a devotee would hand him the rope. As the devotees chanted and danced ecstatically, Prabhupāda would pull the bell in time to the kīrtana, and at the same time he would raise his left hand to indicate that devotees should chant and dance more and more.

Ānakadundubhi: Śrīla Prabhupāda would sit on the veranda looking over all of Māyāpur. I saw him watching some boys herding their cows. He was absorbed in watching the whole place. Then someone gave him a little pair of binoculars, and he would look out across Māyāpur, with one finger up in the air. He looked like a general. He was looking across to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's house, and then he spotted the birthplace of Lord Caitanya. He looked at it very closely, and then he said, "Almost no men. They have no men."

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: One day Prabhupāda called in the G.B.C. members. It was in the afternoon, and we could see he was feeling very blissful. He was hearing the kīrtana in the temple. He said everyone should come to Māyāpur and chant twenty-four hours a day. He said, "There is so much room here. The morning class is so nice—Prahāda Mahārāja's instruction a million years ago. A five-year-old boy was speaking. The chanting, according to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, is the

only solace. It is nothing material, the chanting. Ajāmila called the name of Nārāyaṇa and was saved."

Prabhupāda said that batches of devotees should come to Māyāpur so that there should always be five hundred men present. Then a devotee said, "In America they are trying to chant more, twelve hours a day, trying to get a twenty-four-hour kīrtana schedule." "Yes, everywhere," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "this chanting should go on. Instead of meetings, resolutions, dissolutions, revolutions, and then no solutions, there should be chanting."

Gopavṛndapāla: I had guard duty, and Prabhupāda would get up around twelve midnight or one o'clock. He would be upstairs, and I would be one floor below. He was chanting a lot, pacing back and forth on the balcony. I couldn't see him, but I could see his shaven head silhouetted. He was walking about ten steps one way and then ten steps the other way. I had a three-hour watch, and I sat there chanting my japa and watching Prabhupāda's head go back and forth. Sometimes I could hear when his chanting was louder. I was reminded of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, because Śrīla Prabhupāda described many times the balcony where Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī paced back and forth, envisioning and considering how to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. So Prabhupāda was also pacing and thinking how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Ānakadundubhi: In Prabhupāda's room on the wall there was a beautiful sandalwood carving of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, just like on the Kṛṣṇa book cover, with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa standing, Rādhārāṇī with Her arm around Kṛṣṇa, holding His flute, and Kṛṣṇa holding His cape around Her. When there weren't any guests for darśana, Prabhupāda would just sit and look at that picture. He loved it very much. When I would take his garland up to him, he would wear it during darśana for about an hour and a half, then after darśana he would get up and go to the bathroom after first taking the garland off. Then he would come back and give the garland to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. A number of times I gave him garlands made of very fragrant little white flowers that Jananivāsa would give me. Prabhupāda used to take that garland and put it on Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in such a beautiful way. It was the perfection of Deity worship, the way he put that little garland there.

Jananivāsa: Just before Prabhupāda left, I came up and I asked him, "Frankincense, Śrīla Prabhupāda?" There was no one else in the room at the time, and he was just chanting japa sitting in his room. I started to fill up the room with smoke from the frankincense. Smoke was coming out everywhere, and Prabhupāda kept the windows closed. He looked up and said, "This creates such an atmosphere of spiritual understanding. This is so nice, so nice." Then he started chanting again.

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: When Prabhupāda was finally finished conducting the Māyāpur festival, I asked him if he was tired. Prabhupāda said, "What tired? So many people are coming and hearing about Kṛṣṇa. When preaching, you feel refreshed."

CHAPTER FIFTY

The Lame Man

and the Blind Man

Ever since the BBT Press marathon in the summer of 1975, the Press had continued to keep up with Śrīla Prabhupāda's writing. A sweet, transcendental competition had developed between Prabhupāda, his Press, and the book distributors. In November of 1975, Prabhupāda had written to one of the leading book distributors,

The BBT says that they are publishing at the speed of my translating and that you will distribute at the pace of publishing. That's nice. But still I am ahead in my translation work. They owe me now the sixth canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. I am working already on the seventh canto.

In recent months, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda's literary output had been diminishing, mostly because of his involvement in management. His direct supervision of the construction in Bombay, his month-long managerial drive in Vṛndāvana, his struggle to heal a major ISKCON schism—such activities were not conducive to writing. In Māyāpur when the devotees had failed to control the slamming of doors, he had complained bitterly that this “heart-cracking” sound interrupted his meditative translating. He explained that he sometimes thought for two or three days about a single purport before actually writing it.

Actually, the word translating is incomplete in describing Śrīla Prabhupāda's writing. Translating involved only the verses and synonyms, but Prabhupāda's deepest meditations—what he referred to as his “personal ecstasies”—were his Bhaktivedanta purports. Composing the purports, as well as translating the verses, came best when he could think about them throughout the day, not just when he turned on his dictating machine at one A.M. He was translating the extremely grave and complex Vedic knowledge into a modern context, thus making it understandable to Western readers. And it was a great, demanding task.

To best speak to the people of the world through his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam writings, Śrīla Prabhupāda required a very conducive situation. After the Māyāpur festival, therefore, he formulated an itinerary that, in about a month's time, would bring him to Hawaii. There he expected to find an atmosphere beneficial for his literary work. His traveling secretary, Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Swami, wrote ahead to Hawaii shortly after the Māyāpur festival.

Prabhupāda must do a lot of translating, so don't set up programs outside. And if there have to be guests, it must be restricted to 5 p.m. only, until about 6:30 each evening. If these things are nicely arranged, then Prabhupāda will stay some time to translate.

Since Prabhupāda's itinerary also included another U.S. tour, his secretary wrote ahead to Kīrtanānanda Swami in New Vrindaban.

Prabhupāda has revealed a bit more about things. He said that as time goes on he is less and less concerned about seeing visitors. He mentioned that Aurobindo saw visitors only once a year on his birthday. Although Prabhupāda deemed this is not possible now, I asked him where he would like to go for some time to translate. He said New Vrindaban, and he said he would go there after the Ratha-yatra in New York.

Hawaii

May 3, 1976

After brief visits in several Indian cities, as well as stops in Melbourne, Auckland, and Fiji, Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in Hawaii on schedule. Immediately he began to increase his writing. The devotees were keenly noting the number of digits he ran up each night on his dictating machine, which for them was like a measure of the benediction for all humanity. Whereas in India he had done usually no more than a hundred digits a day, and sometimes none, in Hawaii his rate jumped to two hundred and even three hundred, day after day. Hari-śauri, who had accompanied Prabhupāda from Vṛndāvana as his servant, wrote in his diary, "Prabhupāda is translating like anything now, and he did 290 digits again last night."

The temple was in a quiet neighborhood, with several acres of gardenlike property. In the backyard stood a large, stately banyan tree, and in the front, the largest tulasī bushes anywhere in ISKCON. The devotees grew their own vegetables, and flowers, mangoes, and coconuts were so plentiful that they were available free. The weather was sunny, interspersed with occasional showers.

Prabhupāda felt ill and could not sleep more than one-and-a-half hours at night and one or two hours during the day. But being transcendental, he used this inability to sleep as another way to increase his writing time. Despite his emphasis on writing, however, he continued lecturing in the temple, going on morning walks, holding discussions on the beach, and daily answering his mail. Still, Hawaii was far from being like Vṛndāvana or Calcutta, where old friends and new admirers demanded hours of his time. Here he was mostly alone with his trained staff.

He had been in Honolulu about a week when he announced one morning, walking along Waikiki Beach, that he expected to finish that night the last purport to the Seventh Canto. When Hari-śauri expressed his happiness to hear this, Prabhupāda replied, "Oh, I can finish very quickly, but I have to present it for your understanding. It requires deep thought, very carefully, to present it for the common man."

That night around nine, Prabhupāda called for Hari-śauri and said that he would not take his evening massage; he wanted the time for finishing the Seventh Canto. Shutting the door and returning to his desk he worked all night until five in the morning. At the end of the Seventh Canto, he dictated a closing remark.

—Completed on the night of Vaiśākhī-śuklā Ekādaśī, the tenth of May, 1976, in the temple of the Pañcatattva, New Navadvīpa (Honolulu), by the mercy of śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrī vāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda. Thus we may happily chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Immediately Prabhupāda turned to the Eighth Canto, beginning with a prayer: "First of all, let me offer my humble, respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswami Prabhupāda." Prabhupāda explained that his spiritual master had instructed him at Rādhā-kuṇḍa in 1935 to stress book production more than temple construction. He had followed that instruction, beginning with his starting Back to Godhead

magazine in 1944, and in 1958 he had begun Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As soon as he had published three volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in India, he had started for the U.S. in August 1965.

I am continuously trying to publish books, as suggested by my spiritual master. Now, in this year, 1976, I have completed the Seventh Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and a summary of the Tenth Canto has already been published as Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Still, the Eighth Canto, Ninth Canto, Tenth Canto, Eleventh Canto and Twelfth Canto are yet to be published. On this occasion, therefore, I am praying to my spiritual master to give me strength to finish this work. I am neither a great scholar nor a great devotee; I am simply a humble servant of my spiritual master, and to the best of my ability I am trying to please him by publishing these books, with the cooperation of my disciples in America. Fortunately, scholars all over the world are appreciating these publications. Let us cooperatively publish more and more volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam just to please His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

Prabhupāda said he was making the Bhāgavatam understandable for the common man. This did not mean his writings were lacking in substance; they were pure substance. But in the essential spirit of the Bhāgavatam itself, Prabhupāda was omitting anything extraneous and distracting, selecting from the commentaries of the previous ācāryas whatever would best impel his readers to pure devotional service. At the beginning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the author, Śrīla Vyāsadeva, states that the Bhāgavatam excludes all materially motivated forms of religiosity and offers only pure devotional service. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is therefore called the ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge. And just as the Bhāgavatam is itself the most essential spiritual knowledge, so Śrīla Prabhupāda, in translating and commenting on the Bhāgavatam, utilized the same spirit of delivering the pure message, without any speculation or deviation.

According to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam: Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the source of all incarnations, the cause of all causes. And Prabhupāda revealed this conclusion on every page. Although some Sanskrit scholars disagreed with Prabhupāda's emphasis on Kṛṣṇa, his "Kṛṣṇa-izing" of the Sanskrit was not whimsical but followed strictly the ancient tradition of paramparā. Overwhelmingly, those university scholars who seriously read Prabhupāda's books appreciated the faithful quality of his paramparā Rendering. Reviews came from all over the world.

"...For those who have no access to the Sanskrit language, these books convey, in superb manner, the message of the Bhāgavatam." Dr. Alaka Hejib, Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University.

"...It is a deeply felt, powerfully conceived, and beautifully explained work. I don't know whether to praise more this translation of the Bhagavad-gītā, its daring method of explanation, or the endless fertility of its ideas. I have never seen any other work on the Gītā with such an important voice and style... It will occupy a significant place in the intellectual and ethical life of modern man for a long time to come." Dr. Shaligram Shukla, Professor of Linguistics, Georgetown University.

"...For the first time we possess a readily accessible edition for this great religious classic that will provide opportunity for scholars in Indian literature and followers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness tradition alike to compare the original text with a modern English translation and become

acquainted with the deeper spiritual meaning of this work through the learned commentary of Śrī Bhaktivedanta.

“...Anyone who gives a close reading to the commentary will sense that here, as in his other works, Śrī Bhaktivedanta has combined a healthy mixture of the fervent devotion and aesthetic sensitivity of a devotee and the intellectual rigor of a textual scholar. At no point does the author allow the intended meaning of the text to be eclipsed by the promotion of a particular doctrinal persuasion.

“...These exquisitely wrought volumes will be a welcome addition to the libraries of all persons who are committed to the study of Indian spirituality and religious literature, whether their interests are sparked by the motivations of the scholar, the devotee, or the general reader.” Dr. J. Bruce Long, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University.

“This English edition translated by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is superb. It contains the original Sanskrit and Bengali verses with their English transliteration, synonyms, translations, and elaborate purports, easily bearing testimony to the author's profound knowledge of the subject.” Dr. O. B. L. Kapoor, Emeritus Chairman and Professor, Department of Philosophy, Government Postgraduate College, Gyanpur, India.

The Vedic literature mentions various spiritual paths and forms of yoga, and unless the commentator has realized the highest Vedic conclusion, he can easily miss the essential message of the Bhāgavatam. Indeed, impersonalist commentators have attempted to use the Bhāgavatam to support their speculations that the individual soul is in all respects one with the Supreme—even though this contradicts the purpose of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As a commentator on the Vedic literature, Śrīla Prabhupāda was distinguished, even among Vaiṣṇava scholars, because of his being in disciplic succession from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is glorified as patita-pāvana, the savior of the most fallen. As a follower and empowered representative of Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Prabhupāda was faithfully and perfectly carrying on the tradition of rescuing fallen souls, bringing them back to their original Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda's making Bhāgavatam's message “available,” therefore, did not mean mere simplification. It meant urgently addressing the reader to give up the world of illusion and take to the eternal liberation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda was making available to the average reader spiritual truth that had been hidden and unavailable, even to austere practitioners of yoga and learned brāhmaṇas proficient in Sanskrit. “Old wine in new bottles,” Prabhupāda called it.

The Vaiṣṇava's arguments against impersonalism had been chalked out by Madhvācārya and Rāmāṇujācārya and later synthesized by Lord Caitanya into the philosophy of acintya-bhedābheda-tattva, “simultaneous oneness and difference.” These eternal truths had to be presented in every age, but in the traditional debates between the Vaiṣṇavas and the impersonalists, the authoritative basis had always been Vedic scripture.

Modern society, however, was so degraded that a preacher could no longer appeal to the authority of Vedic scripture—no one would accept it. Śrīla Prabhupāda's writings, therefore, dealt with such theories as the origin of life by chance, Darwinian evolution, and chemical evolution. And he defeated them all with strong logic, establishing that life comes from life, not from dead matter.

Prabhupāda had dedicated one of his first books, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, to “the scientists of the world,” and had even adapted the *Bhagavad-gītā* verses quoted in that book into scientific jargon of “matter and antimatter.” Deftly he used both śāstra and logic to establish the Vedic conclusion.

Prabhupāda's writings also combatted the false teachings of bogus yogīs, gurus, and “incarnations,” who had appeared like a tidal wave of falsity in Kali-yuga, both in India and in the West. His writings criticized modern political institutions also, analyzing why monarchies fell, why democracy was also failing and how dictatorship would increasingly harass the citizens. The governments' policies of abusive taxation and their propaganda to bring people to the cities to work in the factories, abandoning simple, agrarian life, were all discussed in light of the scriptures.

In his travels, Śrīla Prabhupāda had observed the rampant degradation of human society: sexual liberation, the latest fads in intoxication, and the vicious crimes of animal slaughter and meat-eating. A *Bhagavad-gītā* purport dealt specifically with the threat of nuclear holocaust.

Such people are considered the enemies of the world because ultimately they will invent or create something which will bring destruction to all. Indirectly, this verse anticipates the invention of nuclear weapons, of which the world is today very proud. At any moment war may take place, and these atomic weapons may create havoc. Such things are created solely for the destruction of the world and this is indicated here. Due to godlessness, such weapons are invented in human society; they are not meant for the peace and prosperity of the world.

Prabhupāda's criticisms were strong and authoritative, befitting a true ācārya; his uncompromising spirit was appealing. He was not a timid scholar pointing out some obscure historical references. Yet underlying his writing, a humble tone of request spoke to the heart. As the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa, he asked everyone to please take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness and be restored to his original, constitutional position of eternity, bliss, and knowledge.

Prabhupāda was making his books practical. But to do so required care and deep meditation. He combined the thoughtfulness of a textual scholar with the practical applications of a transcendental social and political reformer. So many scholars had already presented their English editions of *Bhagavad-gītā*, yet not a single reader had become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, however, was creating thousands of devotees.

More than simply rendering valuable Vedic literatures, Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to the West, starting in New York City, to establish a way of life based on that Vedic literature. Consequently, he had gained firsthand experience in bringing the most materialistic persons to the standard of renunciation and devotional service. His books, therefore, reflected these practical realizations, and many times in his purports he would relate his difficulties and triumphs in trying to introduce spiritual principles within materialistic society.

In the Sixth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* he had presented the story of Dakṣa's cursing Nārada Muni, after Nārada had instructed Dakṣa's sons in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The jealous father, considering Nārada his enemy, had cursed him to be always traveling, without any home. In his commentary, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written that he also had been cursed by the parents of his

disciples; therefore, despite his having many centers around the world, he had to constantly travel and preach.

And in the Seventh Canto, while commenting on the demon Hiranyakaśipu's harassment of his son Prahlaḍa, Śrīla Prabhupāda had related the difficulties of the ISKCON devotees in distributing books amid the harassment of Hiranyakaśipu's modern counterparts.

Thus Prabhupāda was imbuing his literature with the thoughtfulness of his own personality, that of a pure devotee faithfully dedicating his body, mind, and words in service to the Bhāgavatam. As the word bhāgavata refers not only to narrations about the Supreme Lord but also to the Lord's devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda was himself bhāgavata. And through his books one could gain the inspiration of service to both the book and the person bhāgavata.

After two weeks in Hawaii, Śrīla Prabhupāda was well into the Eighth Canto, averaging up to three hundred digits daily. His health improved also, although his sleeping remained minimal. "Of course," Prabhupāda said reflectively, "it is very good from the spiritual point of view if you don't sleep much."

When news came of a temple president having difficulty with his G.B.C. authority, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw it as another example of how his writing work—his most important preaching—could be hampered by disruptions. He therefore composed a letter addressed to all the Governing Body Commissioners.

My dear G.B.C. disciples,

Please accept my blessings. Over the past ten years I have given the framework, and now we have become more than the British Empire. Even the British Empire was not as expansive as we. They had only a portion of the world, and we have not completed expanding. We must expand more and more unlimitedly. But I must now remind you that I have to complete the translation of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. This is the greatest contribution; our books have given us a respectable position. People have no faith in this church or temple worship. Those days are gone. Of course, we have to maintain the temples as it is necessary to keep our spirits high. Simply intellectualism will not do; there must be practical purification.

So I request you to relieve me of management responsibilities more and more so that I can complete the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam translation. If I am always having to manage, then I cannot do my work on the books. It is document. I have to choose each word very soberly and if I have to think of management then I cannot do this. I cannot be like these rascals who present something mental concoction to cheat the public. So this task will not be finished without the cooperation of my appointed assistants, the G.B.C., temple presidents, and sannyasis. I have chosen my best men to be G.B.C. and I do not want that the G.B.C. should be disrespectful to the temple presidents. You can naturally consult me, but if the basic principle is weak, how will things go on? So please assist me in the management so that I can be free to finish the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, which will be our lasting contribution to the world.

While maintaining his excellent progress on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Prabhupāda also got the opportunity in Hawaii to begin another book. His long-time disciple and editor Hayagrīva wrote, asking to assist Śrīla Prabhupāda in a series of interview-commentaries on the Western philosophers. This was the same project Prabhupāda had begun with his former secretary, Śyāmasundara, but when Śyāmasundara had abandoned his duties in ISKCON, he had also misplaced the tapes and transcripts of the considerable work they had done together.

Hayagrīva proposed to start again, beginning with Socrates and Plato. The process would be that Hayagrīva would present before Prabhupāda a summary of a particular Western thinker's philosophy. Prabhupāda would then respond extemporaneously, giving appreciation and criticism of the philosopher according to the Vedic viewpoint.

Prabhupāda and his disciples had been enthusiastic about the interviews done in former years, and Prabhupāda had even titled the series—"Dialectical Spiritualism." But when Śyāmasundara had misplaced the tapes, the project had dissipated. Now Hayagrīva, the former college English professor and original editor for Back to Godhead in America, asked to be allowed to come to Hawaii for reviving the philosophy book and for spending time with Prabhupāda.

Like various other disciples, Hayagrīva had given up strictly following the regulative principles. Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to tolerate the reality that some disciples, even after taking vows of initiation, would be unable to resist the strong pull of the senses and would give up the path of active devotional service in ISKCON. In the early years, he and his followers had reacted with great shock whenever a devotee had gone away; but with time, as the unfortunate event had continued to occur, sometimes even striking down leading, trusted disciples, Prabhupāda had grown to live with it. But he never stopped feeling bereaved over a lost son or daughter, especially if that disciple had rendered him significant service. And he never withheld his affection from them or his open, loving invitation for them to return.

Such a case was Hayagrīva, a dear son who had come to Śrīla Prabhupāda during the summer of 1966 in New York. He had given valuable service, but had eventually been unable to follow the simple but strict principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now, after suffering the vicissitudes of material life, he had gathered his resolve to come back to his beloved spiritual master.

Hayagrīva entered Prabhupāda's room. "It's your old Hayagrīva, Prabhupāda," he said, and he fell to the floor, sobbing.

Prabhupāda gave him a garland and asked him how he and his family were doing. Then in the presence of the other devotees, Prabhupāda related how Hayagrīva had been sent by Kṛṣṇa to help him spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world.

When Hayagrīva said he had never forgotten Prabhupāda, even for a day, Prabhupāda replied, "And I also never forgot you. I was thinking, 'Has Hayagrīva gone away?' I was thinking like that." Prabhupāda's voice broke, his eyes filled with tears, and he could not speak. Finally he asked everyone to leave the room.

Prabhupāda and Hayagrīva began meeting daily, sometimes for as long as two or three hours. Dialectical Spiritualism was again underway, moving side by side with the Eighth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and Hayagrīva was again in his original position, at Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet.

Although Prabhupāda had written to the G.B.C. requesting them to solve ISKCON's problems, he continued to keep informed of the problems as his assistants reluctantly reported to him the bad news. One day a telegram arrived from Madhudviṣa Swami, a dynamic G.B.C. man in charge of ISKCON in one region of the U.S. Madhudviṣa was having serious difficulty remaining strong in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In most cases, the difficulties of Prabhupāda's disciples were urges toward sensuality. Almost never did disciples turn against Prabhupāda, nor did they often reject the philosophical conclusions of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They simply fell victim to māyā's allurements.

Madhudviṣa's telegram was a resignation from the G.B.C. Although he wanted to continue in devotional service, he felt forced to resign due to spiritual weakness. The telegram gave no details, but Prabhupāda heard rumors that Madhudviṣa had had an affair and had left the temple. Prabhupāda said that this was his Godbrothers' main argument against Westerners' taking sannyāsa: they would not be able to maintain the strict vows. He said that a German Godbrother of his had also caused disruption by his intimate dealings with women.

"What can I do?" Prabhupāda said sadly. "I am working with all third-class men—fools and rascals. Things are going on simply by Kṛṣṇa's mercy." Prabhupāda sent a telegram back, asking Madhudviṣa to come and speak with him. Although he restrained his emotions, the devotees could see that he was distracted. It was another case of a strong affectionate bond for a son who had rendered wonderful service, a disciple whom he had patiently trained over the years. Again the possibility of Prabhupāda's retiring from active management looked doubtful.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said he was trying to engage fools, rascals—anyone—to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was unable to find strict followers, but what could be done? If someone fell from sannyāsa, he said, then that person could become a gr̥hastha. But no one should go away. Hari-śauri mentioned the Caitanya-caritāmṛta story of Lord Caitanya and Choṭa Haridāsa. From that story, said Hari-śauri, it appeared to be very difficult for a fallen sannyāsī to regain the mercy of Lord Caitanya.

"One who falls from sannyāsa," Prabhupāda replied, "is called vantāśī, one who vomits and then eats it."

"So if they become gr̥hasthas again, then how can they get Lord Caitanya's mercy?" asked Hari-śauri.

"If the spiritual master gives that facility and makes that arrangement," said Prabhupāda, "then Kṛṣṇa will accept the arrangement. And later he can again become sannyāsa." It had happened before, and Prabhupāda mentioned a few cases where he had asked fallen sannyāsīs to get married and stay in their service. "Of course, it is a shameful position," he said, "but what can be done? My Godbrothers and sannyāsīs in India criticize me for giving brāhmaṇa and sannyāsa initiation and installing Deities in the West and allowing women to stay in the temples. But for all that, I am

expanding Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And for all their strictness, they are doing nothing. If I discriminate, then I will again be one alone, as I was in Vṛndāvana, and “again become a mouse.”

“It seems,” said Hari-śauri, “that it will take several generations before we can become purified.”

“If one is sincere,” Prabhupāda replied, “he can become purified even within one generation.”

That same evening, as Prabhupāda prepared to stay up all night translating, he was still thinking of Madhudviṣa. Nevertheless, he turned to translating the texts in the chapter called “The Elephant Gajendra's Crisis.” The chapter told about the king of elephants, Gajendra, who lived on the heavenly planets. One day Gajendra was bathing in the river along with his wives, when suddenly a crocodile attacked. The crocodile fastened his jaws on Gajendra's leg, and although the elephant was very powerful, he could not release himself from the strong grip of the crocodile while in the water.

“Thereafter,” Śrīla Prabhupāda dictated, “because of being pulled into the water and fighting for many long years, the elephant became diminished in his mental, physical, and sensual strength. The crocodile, on the contrary, being an animal of the water, increased in enthusiasm, physical strength, and sensual power.”

“I can do it very quickly,” Prabhupāda had said, “but I have to meditate, how to prepare it for the common man.” How could he convey the significance of this event, which happened millions of years ago between two animals on a heavenly planet? How to make it clear and understandable, and capture the essence of the significant Sanskrit words and the paramparā comments of ācāryas like Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī? In the quiet solitude of his room, Śrīla Prabhupāda began speaking his purport.

“In the fighting between the elephant and the crocodile, the difference was that although the elephant was extremely powerful, he was in a foreign place, in the water. During one thousand years of fighting, he could not get any food, and under the circumstances his bodily strength diminished, and because his bodily strength diminished, his mind also became weak and his senses less powerful. The crocodile, however, being an animal of the water, had no difficulties. He was getting food and was therefore getting mental strength and sensual encouragement. Thus while the elephant became reduced in strength, the crocodile became more and more powerful.

“Now, from this we may take the lesson that in our fight with māyā we should not be in a position in which our strength, enthusiasm and senses will be unable to fight vigorously. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has actually declared war against the illusory energy, in which all the living entities are rotting in a false understanding of civilization. The soldiers in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must always possess physical strength, enthusiasm and sensual power. To keep themselves fit, they must therefore place themselves in a normal condition of life.

“What constitutes a normal condition will not be the same for everyone,” Prabhupāda continued, “and therefore there are divisions of varṇāśrama—brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, brahmacarya, gr̥hastha, vānaprastha, and sannyāsa. Especially in this age, Kali-yuga, it is advised that no one take sannyāsa....

“From this we can understand that in this age the sannyāsa-āśrama is forbidden because people are not strong. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu showed us an example in taking sannyāsa at the age of twenty-four years, but even Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya advised Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to be extremely careful because He had taken sannyāsa at an early age. For preaching we give young boys sannyāsa, but actually it is being experienced that they are not fit for sannyāsa.

“There is no harm, however, if one thinks that he is unfit for sannyāsa; if he is very much agitated sexually, he should go to the āśrama where sex is allowed, namely the gr̥hastha-āśrama. That one has been found to be very weak in one place does not mean that he should stop fighting the crocodile of māyā. One should take shelter of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, as we shall see Gajendra do, and at the same time one can be a gr̥hastha if he is satisfied with sexual indulgence.

“There is no need to give up the fight. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore recommended, sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhiḥ. One may stay in whichever āśrama is suitable for him; it is not essential that one take sannyāsa. If one is sexually agitated, he can enter the gr̥hastha-āśrama. But one must continue fighting. For one who is not in a transcendental position, to take sannyāsa artificially is not a very great credit. If sannyāsa is not suitable, one may enter the gr̥hastha-āśrama and fight māyā with great strength. But one should not give up the fighting and go away.”

From out of his direct confrontation with the forces of illusion, Śrīla Prabhupāda presented his realizations. He had taken the case of Madhudviṣa, refined it of its temporal aspects, and immortalized it into an instruction for persons everywhere.

Prabhupāda's job was to strengthen his disciples so they would not fall. Even if they took to the gr̥hastha-āśrama, the crocodile of sense gratification was still very strong. And illicit sex was the “permanent disease” of the Western people. They were raised on it and addicted to it, and their society promoted it. To change this mentality would be very difficult. Therefore, in addition to writing, Prabhupāda would have to continue traveling and preaching to sustain his disciples and make them strong preachers.

As Prabhupāda had originally left his writing at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana to preach in the West, so he could leave his writing retreat in Hawaii for preaching. In any case, he was prepared to continue writing wherever he went. All along he had planned to stay in Hawaii only for a month, not permanently. His disciples needed to see him for strength and inspiration, and as long as he had life and breath, this was his purpose.

* * *

Prabhupāda wanted to first visit his Los Angeles center, now a large, thriving community of devotees. He would see their new temple room, with its marble arches and gallery of gorgeous transcendental paintings, and observe the opulent worship of the Deities Rukmiṇī-Dvārakādhīśa. He would see the latest technological applications of Kṛṣṇa consciousness at Golden Avatara recording studios and at the FATE museum, which utilized multimedia dioramas to depict the teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā. He would sit in his garden and hear Kṛṣṇa book and walk on Venice Beach discussing scientific theories with Dr. Svarūpa Dāmodara. And, of course, he would increase

the already swelling waves of book distribution. One day in the car he had said, "My books will be the lawbooks for human society for the next ten thousand years."

Then in Detroit he would stay for a few days in the mansion he had purchased over a year ago, to see how the devotees were taking care of the fabulous gift Kṛṣṇa had given them and to advise them on how to use it as a showpiece of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For himself, Prabhupāda was not interested in living in a mansion, and constant traveling proved difficult regardless of where he stayed. The mansions, the opulence, the American money and expertise were all for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure.

From Detroit Prabhupāda would go to Toronto, where a year ago he had encouraged the devotees and the Indian community to purchase a big church in the city. Now in recent months they had actually purchased it, and they were awaiting Prabhupāda's arrival.

He would also travel to New Vrindaban, where for two years the devotees had been anxiously awaiting his return. They wanted him to sit on the grand new vyāsāsana they had carved for him, to behold the Deities of Rādhā-Vṛndāvanacandra, and to grace the palace they were building for him. And they wanted to see him again with his dear disciple Kīrtanānanda Swami. He would drink the milk of the New Vrindaban cows and teach about varṇāśrama-dharma. He would praise the simple life and blast away at the follies of urbanized, industrialized civilization.

For the fourth of July, 1976, the bicentennial anniversary of the United States' independence, Śrīla Prabhupāda would be at the ISKCON temple in Washington, D.C., where he would hold kīrtana at the monuments before millions of people; and on July 6 in Washington he would observe the tenth anniversary of the formation of ISKCON.

Then he would go to New York for that city's first full-scale Ratha-yātrā. He would stay in the newly acquired ISKCON "skyscraper," the twelve-story building in mid-town Manhattan.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had sometimes said his greatest fear was that his disciples would fight with one another, causing serious splits in his movement. Therefore he traveled, using his great influence to unite all elements. He had seen how even those to whom he had given great responsibility could again become victims of sense gratification. But he had also seen how his being with his disciples strengthened them.

He was declaring humanity's dependence on God, Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and making a forceful revolution against the prevailing decadence of the day. Although America, in her two-hundredth anniversary, was abandoning her God consciousness, Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON was fresh and vital, instilling pure God consciousness in America and everywhere. The cover of the latest issue of Back to Godhead, which Prabhupāda liked, depicted a devotee singing Hare Kṛṣṇa in front of a red, white, and blue bicentennial exhibit. The cover caption read, "Declaring Our Dependence on God."

Prabhupāda had complete confidence in the eventual victory of Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana movement. Although now eighty years old, he was the leader, the strongest devotee. Wherever he traveled he brought life and strength, and so he continued.

New York City

July 9, 1976

Jayānanda was driving the car. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Rāmeśvara Swami were also there. They had picked up Śrīla Prabhupāda and Hari-śauri at La Guardia Airport, and as they proceeded toward Manhattan, Prabhupāda asked, "Things are going on here nicely?"

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa replied that everything had really just begun. "You will see that all of the work is just in progress," he said.

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "manage nicely. Kṛṣṇa is giving us everything. There is no scarcity. If we simply sincerely work, Kṛṣṇa will give us intelligence—everything. By His mercy everything is available. That is Kṛṣṇa. He can give you anything."

As their car approached the colossal Brooklyn Bridge, Śrīla Prabhupāda inquired, "That is Brooklyn Bridge, I think? Sometimes I was coming here and sitting down near the bridge."

"Near the water?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. They were fascinated to hear of Śrīla Prabhupāda's early activities alone in New York. "You were sitting near the water?"

"Yes, that river," said Prabhupāda. "Because I was on that Bowery Street. It is not very far away. So I was coming, walking there, and sitting under that bridge and thinking, 'When I shall return to India?'" He laughed. He asked about other places, almost like inquiring about old friends—the Fulton Street subway station and Chambers Street.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa told Prabhupāda that the ISKCON center was not far from the Empire State Building and that he would be able to get a nice view of it from his room on the eleventh floor. "Our building," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "is right in the midst of the theater, restaurant, and entertainment section of the city."

"In New York," said Prabhupāda, "I feel a little at home, because first I came here. I was loitering on the street here and there. From 1965 September to July 1967, continually I stayed in New York."

"Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja gave a class this morning," said Rāmeśvara Swami. "He was explaining that we cannot understand the good fortune of this city, that you have come here."

"Yes, when I decided that I shall go to a foreign country," said Prabhupāda, "I never thought of going to London; I thought of coming here. Generally they go to London, but I thought, 'No, I shall go to New York.' "

"Very progressive," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa commented.

"I do not know," Prabhupāda laughed. "It is Kṛṣṇa's dictation. I could have gone. London was nearer. But I thought, 'No, I shall go to New York.' Sometimes I was even dreaming that I had gone to New York."

As they passed through various neighborhoods, Śrīla Prabhupāda recalled the old days. He mentioned Dr. Misra's yoga studio and his room at 100 Seventy-second Street, where his tape recorder and typewriter had been stolen; the West End Superette, where he would buy fruit.

"Sometimes I think I was coming to this part," said Prabhupāda, looking out the window, "—aimlessly. Yes, sometimes walking on Second Avenue."

Acknowledging his senior disciple who was steadily and silently driving the car, Prabhupāda said, "Our Jayānanda was driving a taxi and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and one day he brought me five thousand dollars. It was given for the publishing of Bhagavad-gītā, but I think Macmillan took it."

"Then you put him in charge to sell all the Teachings of Lord Chaitanya," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "I remember."

"Didn't sell too many books, though," said Jayānanda. Prabhupāda laughed, while Jayānanda remained silent, intent on the task of driving through the city.

"I thought he was the best, most appropriate person to drive you," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"He was chanting and driving," said Prabhupāda. "Very good boy." As they weaved through Manhattan traffic, a taxi driver shouted at them.

"What does he say?" asked Prabhupāda.

"He said you have a nice car," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "That's good—they like the car."

Prabhupāda laughed. "Ask him, 'Why don't you come here? Why are you driving a taxi? Come join us.' "

"This car is the Ford company's version of a Cadillac," said Rāmeśvara. "They cannot understand, because we say we are not after material opulence for ourselves. They cannot understand why we drive in these cars."

"They think that we unnecessarily criticize," said Prabhupāda. "But we require everything. Just like a man—when he is alive, his decoration, his nice dress, everything is good. But if he is dead, then it is useless. Similarly, without spiritual consciousness we are dead, because the body is dead. Only because the spirit soul is there, therefore it is moving. The important point is the spirit soul. So if you are simply taking care of the body nicely, that means you are decorating the dead body. What is the value of it? Is it clear?"

"The body is important because the soul is there. So long the life is there, if you decorate the body everyone will appreciate. But if you decorate the dead body, everyone will say, 'What a fool he is!'"

Similarly, without spiritual knowledge, this dead civilization simply on the bodily concept of life, it is ludicrous. That we have to condemn. Take Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then everything has value. Just like one—if there is zero, then it becomes ten. Add another zero and it becomes a hundred. But without that one, it is simply zero. It is only useless."

"That 'one' is Kṛṣṇa," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"And Kṛṣṇa's representative," added Rāmeśvara.

As they drove down Fifty-fifth Street, the devotees pointed out to Prabhupāda the ISKCON building, with the words Hare Krishna written in gold letters down the side. A large yellow banner showing a devotee of Lord Caitanya performing saṅkīrtana flew from the front of the building, and a stylish awning, emblazoned "Hare Krishna Center," extended onto the sidewalk. At the sight of Prabhupāda's car, hundreds of devotees at the entrance began to cheer and chant his name.

It was the largest gathering of ISKCON devotees since the Māyāpur festival. Many had come from distant places to be with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and more than six hundred devotees were staying in the building. The kīrtana was tumultuous. Standing before the Deities of Rādhā-Govinda, Prabhupāda appeared pleased. A picture of Lord Jagannātha, Balarāma, and Subhadra was on the third altar, and Prabhupāda said he was anxious to see them on Ratha-yātrā day.

As Prabhupāda sat on the large green vyāsāsana, he was at first too moved with emotion to speak. "First of all I must thank you all for bringing me in the new temple," he began. "Because when I first came, my ambition was to start a temple here in New York, and I was seeking the opportunity." He described some of his first, almost helpless, attempts to buy a twenty-five-by-one-hundred-foot space in Manhattan; but he had been unable to get any money.

"I had no place," he said. "What to speak of a temple, I had no residential place even. So in that condition I was thinking of returning to India. Practically every week I was going to the shipping company. So it is a long history, that I came here with determination to start a temple in New York first. But at that time, ten years before, in 1965, it was not possible. But by the grace of Kṛṣṇa and by the grace of my Guru Mahārāja, you have got this place. So I must thank you very much for organizing this temple.

Later in his lecture Prabhupāda stressed how guru and Kṛṣṇa were saving the conditioned souls from eternal suffering in the material world. "Don't lose this opportunity," he said. "Don't be foolish, misled by so-called scientists, philosophers, or politicians. Take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And that is possible only by guru-kṛṣṇa-kṛpaya. By the mercy of guru and by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa you can achieve all success. This is the secret.

yasya deve parā bhaktir

yathā deve tathā gurau

tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ

prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*

So this guru-pūjā we are doing, it is not self-aggrandizement. It is real teaching. You sing daily, guru-mukha-vākya cittete kariyā aikya.* I tell you frankly, whatever little success is there in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, I simply believed what was spoken by my Guru Mahārāja. You also continue that. Then every success will come. Thank you very much."

Śrīla Prabhupāda then toured the entire twelve-story building. He spoke little but approved of almost everything he saw. His disciples seemed to be managing things properly on his behalf. His quarters were well appointed, with separate rooms for sitting and resting.

"So I shall again stay in New York?" he asked as he sat at his desk.

Ādi-keśava Swami, the temple president, said, "This is your triumphant return, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, "that is my sentiment."

Devotees were eager to point out the features of the rooms, the view from the window, and the relative quiet.

"It's very peaceful for translating work," said Rāmeśvara Swami.

"Oh, yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "When my Guru Mahārāja left, I was alone. So he has sent so many gurus to take care of me. You are my Guru Mahārāja's representatives."

"We are guru-dāsa," a devotee said.

"So you are taking care," said Prabhupāda, "and I am very much obliged to you. I sometimes think of my childhood. I was very, very pet son of my father. I had admitted that in the book. My father was not very rich man, but still, whatever I wanted he would give me. He never chastised me, but full love. Then of course I got friends, and I was married. So by Kṛṣṇa's grace everyone loved me. And I came to this foreign country without any acquaintance. So Kṛṣṇa sent me many fathers to love me. In that way I am fortunate. At the last stage, if I live peacefully, that is the great mercy of Kṛṣṇa. By Kṛṣṇa's mercy everything is possible. So we shall stick to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Then everything is possible."

During Prabhupāda's ten-day stay in New York, the devotees remained in a triumphant, euphoric mood. For the Ratha-yātrā the devotees had permission from the City to have the parade down Fifth Avenue. Prabhupāda had said that New York was the most important city in the world and that a skyscraper would be a beacon of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the world. So now ISKCON had its skyscraper in Manhattan, its Ratha-yātrā parade down Fifth Avenue, and Prabhupāda's personal presence.

One morning Prabhupāda went to where the carts were being built, and Jayānanda and his men showed him the improved construction of the giant wheels. Jayānanda, who was terminally ill with

leukemia, was absorbing himself in the service that had made him dear to Prabhupāda and to all the devotees: organizing Ratha-yātrā and overseeing the construction of the carts.

Prabhupāda would ride to Central Park to take his morning walks. Passing through familiar neighborhoods, he recalled the old days of 1965 and 1966. One morning Kīrtanānanda Swami rode with him in the car.

"My best memories are those early days," said Kīrtanānanda. "Especially the morning classes, Śrīla Prabhupāda, when you'd be sitting behind the desk. The sun would just be coming in, and you would talk for an hour."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "only Hayagrīva and you and..." Prabhupāda and Kīrtanānanda recalled some of the other early devotees: Umāpati, Carl Yeagers, Jim Greene, Rāya Rāma, Satsvarūpa, Brahmānanda.

"At that time," said Prabhupāda, "Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja was taking one capātī."

"Nothing else?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"I would offer," said Prabhupāda, "but he would take one or two, that's all. Later on, one dozen. And that boy Stryadhīśa, he would take at least twenty capātīs. I would say, 'Stryadhīśa, can I offer you?' He would say, 'Yes.' I gave four. Again finished. Again four."

"Originally," said Kīrtanānanda, "we all ate from Prabhupāda's plate. There was one plate of prasādam. And Prabhupāda would just give a little for everybody, and everybody would be satisfied."

"I used to keep some prasādam," said Prabhupāda. "Anyone would come, I would give."

"After class," recalled Kīrtanānanda, "you always distributed some prasādam. After kīrtana and class."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "I was clapping my hands. In the meeting, I used to collect not less than six dollars, not more than twenty dollars. Three times a week."

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's triumph was that the early days of struggle were over, when he recalled them, he was immersed in a very special, sweet remembrance. He changed from one mood to another, and sometimes mixed them—the days of his helpless, utter dependence on Kṛṣṇa when no one else was present, and his present satisfaction, surrounded by hundreds of faithful disciples. While remembering the old days, he was now realizing his original goals for ISKCON New York, "the beacon-light for our worldwide propaganda."

In the late afternoon as the sun was setting, Śrīla Prabhupāda liked to sit on the roof of his skyscraper, and his disciples would sit with him. Although the building was in Midtown, being situated on the West Side afforded it a feeling of distance from the intensity of mid-Manhattan.

Prabhupāda would look out at the Manhattan skyline, and a breeze from the Hudson would ease the July heat.

One evening, some of the devotees described to Śrīla Prabhupāda some of the abominable activities going on in the city. They told him of prostitution and pornography, of acts of rampant criminal violence, and of the strange fetishes and fads of the flesh-eaters, including the eating of human fetuses.

"This means," said Prabhupāda, "that we are actually preaching to animals."

One night on the roof, Rāmeśvara Swami asked Śrīla Prabhupāda to reveal his plan for conquering the world with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda was silent. Finally he said, "No. Because if I tell you my plans, then they may be spoiled." He had a plan, he said, but they were not ready for it.

The Ratha-yātrā procession, with its three fifty-foot-tall carts, began at Grand Army Plaza on Fifth Avenue and proceeded downtown. Young men, girls in sārīs, Indians, New Yorkers—hundreds—tugged at the ropes, pulling the gigantic chariots. With silken towers billowing yellow, green, red, and blue in the wind, slowly and majestically, the carts sailed south. The parade was complete with beautiful weather, hundreds of chanting and dancing devotees, and thousands of onlookers. And the route was some fifty blocks down Fifth Avenue, "the most important street in the world," to Washington Square Park.

At Thirty-fourth Street Prabhupāda joined the procession. As he came forward to board the chariot of Subhadra, the devotees converged around him, amazing the policemen and other onlookers with their spontaneous adoration of Kṛṣṇa's representative. Although the inner meaning of Ratha-yātrā is the gopīs' desire for Kṛṣṇa to return to Vṛndāvana, these devotees were more absorbed in Śrīla Prabhupāda's return to New York.

It was a gorgeous, appropriate climax to Prabhupāda's ten years of preaching in New York City. When he had first come he had had no money, no place of his own to live, and no place for people to congregate and hear about Kṛṣṇa. Now he was riding in splendor down Fifth Avenue at the Ratha-yātrā festival, and his Rādhā-Govinda Deities had a skyscraper. In 1965 he had been alone on the street, but now he was accompanied by six hundred disciples, loudly singing the holy names and benefiting millions of conditioned souls.

In front of Subhadra's cart walked Jayānanda, holding the steering tongue, keeping the cart on course. As Prabhupāda sat comfortably on the cart he fondly glanced at Jayānanda from time to time. Jayānanda, steering with his left hand, would hold his right hand upraised, cheering Prabhupāda's Ratha-yātrā and rallying the others to pull the ropes and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

When the procession arrived, Washington Square Park was crowded with people. A temporary stage had been erected, and Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Deities took their places. Kirtanānanda Swami introduced Prabhupāda before the crowd, and Prabhupāda stood up to speak.

Beginning by explaining the significance of Ratha-yātrā, Śrīla Prabhupāda told the story of how the Jagannātha Deities were carved at the request of the king of Orissa over two thousand years ago.

When the king had disturbed the sculptor before the Deities were completed, the sculptor had left. "But the king decided, 'I shall worship this unfinished Deity, never mind.'

"So the devotee is offering," Prabhupāda continued, "and Kṛṣṇa accepts... if it is offered with love and affection. He says in the Bhagavad-gītā, *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam/ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*. Kṛṣṇa says anyone who offers Him a little flower, a little water, a little fruit with love and affection, 'I eat them, I accept them.'

"That means that even the poorest man in the world can worship God. There is no hindrance—*ahaitukī apratihātā*—devotional service cannot be checked by any material condition. There is no restriction of caste or creed or country, nation. Anyone can worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, according to his means.

"And our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is a propagation to teach people how to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is our mission, because without relationship with God, without reviving our eternal affinity with God, we cannot be happy."

All living entities, Prabhupāda explained, are children of the supreme father, Kṛṣṇa, or God. But only in the human form of life can one understand his relationship with God. If one misuses his life and doesn't understand his duty to Kṛṣṇa, then his life is spoiled.

"So please do not take this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as any sectarian movement. It is the science of God. Try to understand the science of God. Either you accept it directly, or you try to understand through philosophy and science. We have got so many books. Kindly take advantage of this movement, why we are distributing so many literatures. Soberly and with calm head, try to understand this movement. This is our only mission. Thank you very much."

As Śrīla Prabhupāda left to return to the temple, prasādam distribution began and the dramatic actors prepared to go onstage with their rendition of "Kali and His Consort, Sin."

In the evening the parade and festival received good coverage on all major TV stations, and the next morning, pictures and articles appeared in the newspapers. Prabhupāda particularly liked the New York Daily News centerspread, where several photos bore a large caption: "Fifth Avenue, Where East Meets West."

"Send this cutting to many places," Prabhupāda said. "Send it to Indira Gandhi. This title is very nice. This is the point. 'East meets West.' As I always say, the lame man meets the blind man. Together they do wonderful, and apart they cannot do anything. He is lame, and he is blind. But if they join together—Indian culture and American money—they will save the whole world."

Śrīla Prabhupāda heard from the New York Times article, which stressed how the parade included hundreds of Indians "who were pleased to see they could keep faith even in New York City." The article quoted "an Indian immigrant" as saying, "We love New York City, America. It's the most beautiful place in the world. No other country will give such freedom for our own ceremony."

"That's a fact," Prabhupāda said. "That I always say. The Times first published about my activities when I was in Tompkins Square Park." At the festival site, prasādam had been served to seven thousand people. And even when the devotees had walked back uptown with the carts late at night, hundreds of people had followed and chanted. The devotees were already talking about how to improve the festival for next year. They could have a press box, and Prabhupāda suggested they rent a small building downtown and call it Guṇḍicā.* Lord Jagannātha could stay there for one week. Then the devotees should have another procession and festival with Lord Jagannātha returning to the temple on Fifty-fifth Street.

"Last night," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, "all night we were cleaning up the grounds at the park. So one woman who lives next to the park said, 'In all my years of living here I've never seen such a wonderful festival held.' And on CBS television, the official who's in charge of the park said, 'We are very proud to be able to say that this park was founded hundreds of years ago when America was religious and that spiritual life is still present in Washington Square Park.' "

"So why not ask the mayor to construct a temple there?" said Śrīla Prabhupāda. The devotees all laughed. But Prabhupāda thought such things were certainly possible.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's health was worsening, as often happened when he traveled extensively. Particularly in New York his health began to suffer. His itinerary was to continue on to London, Paris, Tehran, Bombay, and then to Hyderabad, where he would conduct the opening ceremony of a new ISKCON temple. Senior devotees entreated him to rest awhile before going to England and India. He had spent a very pleasant day at the ISKCON farm in Pennsylvania, and the devotees suggested he go there for two or three months to rest, recover his health, and write. Every day they would beg him to please stay. When he heard that the G.B.C. members in New York had unanimously recommended he not immediately travel, he said, "All right. I will not travel."

But he could not be bound by the G.B.C., however—only by Kṛṣṇa. He already had his plane tickets, and he remained set on traveling.

On the morning of Prabhupāda's departure, a few devotees came to his room to make a last attempt, begging him not to travel. He said nothing, though he was obviously set on leaving. His servants were packing his bags and everything was ready to go. Nevertheless, even as he left his room and got on the elevator, a few men followed, still suggesting he not go.

"Prabhupāda, please reconsider," said Rāmeśvara Swami. Śrīla Prabhupāda had remained jolly so far, despite his physical weakness, and despite his disciples' pleading. But now his face changed.

"Don't travel," one devotee said. And another added, "Just stay. Sit down and rest."

Prabhupāda turned, and his eyes were very deep. More than ever he seemed not of this material world. "I want the benediction to go on fighting for Kṛṣṇa," he said, "just like Arjuna."

Everyone remained silent, and the important instruction burned into their memories. The elevator opened on the main floor and hundreds of waiting devotees chanted and cheered as Śrīla Prabhupāda walked to his car.

On the way to the airport the devotees again began talking about how degraded Kali-yuga was. "But you have to go on preaching," Prabhupāda advised them. "You have to go and try to save these people."

As Śrīla Prabhupāda left America, the devotees knew he would remain with them as long as they followed his instructions. Besides, even if he was leaving them, he would return. He was coming from India to New York, then going back to India, then coming to the West. He was always traveling between East and West, tugging the two cultures together, the lame man and the blind. Like Arjuna he was fighting, and like Nārada Muni he was always traveling, glorifying the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. He would never stop, and those who sincerely followed would be with him.

SPL 51: Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and Fight

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa

and Fight

= Bombay

January 9, 1977

Śrīla Prabhupāda started his morning walk before dawn. He and the devotees knew their way well through Hare Krishna Land to the public road, and once off the property, they turned left then right and began walking down the block leading to the beach. The sky began to lighten. At first they could not visibly distinguish land from sea from sky. But gradually subtle nuances of color revealed the horizon, and they could see the vast plain of the Arabian Sea stretching to meet the even greater sea of sky, where last stars twinkled and faded. As Prabhupāda and his small group walked along the broad beach, they were flanked on their left by a line of leaning palms and on their right by a rumbling surf.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wore a gray woolen cādar around his shoulders, a saffron silk kurtā and dhotī, and peach-colored canvas shoes. He used a cane, leaning not heavily on it, but lightly. With each brisk step he would point the cane ahead, poking it into the sand and lifting it again, rhythmically marking the pace. He walked erectly and held his head high.

A long line of Bombayites, many of them wealthy Juhu residents on their morning stroll, appeared, and a few coconut-wālās set up their carts, cutting off the tops of choice coconuts in anticipation of their first customers. Śrīla Prabhupāda liked to walk at this time of morning, and weather permitting, he would do so no matter where he was in the world. Juhu Beach, however, was one of his favorite places to walk.

Along the way, he and his disciples were joined by Dr. Patel, in white shirt and pants, and several of his friends, mostly doctors and lawyers. Śrīla Prabhupāda had been silent, but now he began to speak.

"How everything is nice," Śrīla Prabhupāda commented, gesturing toward the beach before him. "See the sky, how clear and how nice by Kṛṣṇa. Pūrṇam idam." With his cane he indicated the tall, graceful palm trees. "The tree is called vṛkṣa," he said. "The vṛkṣa-yoni, or birth as a tree, is condemned. By Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, however, the vṛkṣas are also so nicely set up, it becomes beautiful."

"They are all representatives of Kṛṣṇa," said Dr. Patel. "This is perfect."

"Pūrṇam," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, quoting Īsopaniṣad. "Pūrṇam idam, pūrṇam adaḥ." Just as the rising sun illumines everything, Śrīla Prabhupāda discoursed, speaking against the atheistic notion that the complex material creation has no creator. "God's creation," said Prabhupāda, "is perfect and complete because it comes from Him who is pūrṇam, perfect and complete. Aṇḍāntara-stha paramāṇu cayāntara-sthaṁ/ govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi. Paramāṇu means smaller than the atom. Six paramāṇus make one anu. That is atomic dimension—you combine six paramāṇus. So in that paramāṇu also the Lord is there."

"He made it," said Dr. Patel, "and then He entered into it. That is what the Veda says."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "the Paramātmā is there. The whole human life is meant for understanding all this and glorifying the Lord. And they are wasting their lives by imitating the hog."

Prabhupāda again fell silent, except for softly uttering the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Now the beach was light, and many people, out on their morning walks or runs, greeted Śrīla Prabhupāda as they passed. The greetings were always words of respect, or at least "Good morning," and Śrīla Prabhupāda's response was usually "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Suddenly Prabhupāda again began to speak: "There's a very big conspiracy against us."

"By the church?" guessed Dr. Patel.

"Not by the church," said Prabhupāda.

"By the society?"

Prabhupāda uttered a thoughtful "Hmmm," then added, "Now they are determined to cut down this movement." He didn't give any details, and neither Dr. Patel nor the others could fully draw out what was on his mind. Whatever it was, said Dr. Patel, no conspiracy against Kṛṣṇa consciousness could take place in India.

"I wanted to start this movement in India," Prabhupāda replied. "I requested so many friends, 'Give me just one son.' But nobody agreed. They said, 'Swamiji, what will be the benefit by this if I

make my son a Vaiṣṇava or a brāhmaṇa?' They do not give much importance to the movement. They are planning how to stop this movement in so many ways."

Always a faithful Indophile, Dr. Patel replied, "The Americans are like that, always making propaganda."

"There is good and bad in every place," said Prabhupāda. "Kṛṣṇa says, manuṣyānāṁ sahasreṣu. Out of thousands of persons hardly anyone is interested in perfecting his life. This is Kali-yuga."

They walked on, and Śrīla Prabhupāda said no more about it, speaking instead of materialistic household life, in which the chief pleasure is sex. Beyond this abominable sex pleasure, he said, was the full satisfaction of spiritual life.

Prabhupāda walked for half an hour and then turned around and began walking back, wanting to return to the temple by seven, just in time to greet the Deities. Some of the others were flagging from the brisk pace, but Śrīla Prabhupāda strode on, his golden-hued face triumphant in self-realization.

Prabhupāda began talking about the importance of sat-saṅga, association with devotees, and Dr. Patel quipped, "Instead of doing sat-saṅga, people go to Kumbha-melā!" He laughed, as if it were a good joke.

But Prabhupāda corrected him. "No," he said, "Kumbha-melā is sat-saṅga. If you go to Kumbha-melā to find a man of knowledge, then your Kumbha-melā is right. Otherwise, yat-tīrtha-buddhiḥ salile na karhicit, sa eva go-khara. If one thinks that this salila, the water, that just to take bath in the water is Kumbha-melā, then he's a go-khara, a cow or an ass. But if he thinks, 'Now there is an assembly of so many saintly persons, let me take advantage of their knowledge,' then he is intelligent."

Ever since Śrīla Prabhupāda had arrived in Bombay, he had been questioned about the upcoming Kumbha-melā at Allahabad. The Māgh-melā occurred every year, but according to astrological calculations, a more auspicious occasion came every twelfth year: Kumbha-melā. And every twelfth Kumbha-melā (an event that occurred only once in 144 years) was especially auspicious. This year, 1977, was to be such a Melā, and the government was predicting an attendance of twelve million at the confluence of the holy rivers near Allahabad. Śrīla Prabhupāda had said he would go.

"So, sir," said Dr. Patel, "you are going by train to Kumbha-melā?" Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that he liked the train, but Dr. Patel said it was not good for health and that it would be a very long ordeal. He also warned Prabhupāda that Allahabad would be very cold. And if Prabhupāda wanted to leave the Melā early, he would find it very difficult because of the crowds. "I'll get one of my friends to get me some water from Allahabad on that day," laughed Dr. Patel. "I'll take my bath here." Dr. Patel's friends also mentioned the difficulties of extreme weather and crowds at Allahabad during the Melā. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, was not swayed. He was well acquainted with Allahabad, having lived there with his family from 1923 to 1936.

"In 1925," said Prabhupāda, "I went to the Melā. I remember, I was touching the water, and it was so pinching that it was cutting your body. But as soon as you actually get a dip—one... two... three—then you immediately come out, and it is all right."

Prabhupāda mentioned the 1928 Melā, when he was carrying his young child. "I was in the midst of the crowd," he recalled. "It was so big that I was afraid that if there was any rush this child may be finished. But, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, nothing happened."

"What is the reason for the Melā?" asked Prabhupāda's servant, Hari-śauri. "Is it something about some drops of nectar from the Mohiṇī-mūrti?"

"It is actually a religious conference," Prabhupāda replied. "All the different groups gather in that holy place, and they propagate their philosophy there. India is a country of religion. They know spiritual life is more important than this material life—that is India. Now they are diverting their attention to the material. Otherwise, the whole of India is for spiritual life."

About five minutes before seven, Śrīla Prabhupāda left the beach and walked back to Hare Krishna Land. As he approached, he saw the massive two-story towers of the ISKCON hotel and the even taller and grander temple domes. The buildings, however, were unfinished. The temple domes had to be covered with marble, and all the buildings needed numerous finishing touches. Prabhupāda was anxiously anticipating the opening, but Surabhi Mahārāja spoke of delays. The opening date, therefore, remained indefinite.

Delays had been routine ever since Prabhupāda had first tried to purchase the Juhu land from Mr. N. in 1971, and obstacles had plagued all his attempts to build. Now the triumph of installing the Deities of Rādhā-Rāsavihārī in one of the most gorgeous temples in India was near. Rādhā-Rāsavihārī were still being worshiped in the temporary shelter the devotees had erected in 1971, but as Prabhupāda approached, he could see the magnificent temple structure looming behind that humble shed, proclaiming that soon Rāsavihārī would move into His palace. Kṛṣṇa was blessing the faithful work of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples in Bombay. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda was always traveling, pushing his movement ahead on all fronts, he would regularly return to Bombay. He, more clearly than his disciples, could see when the workers were delaying or even cheating. This time, as before, he would stay for a while, give advice, and then move on.

On returning to the ISKCON property, Śrīla Prabhupāda came before the Deities and beheld once again the charming beauty that made him sometimes indicate that of all Deities, these were the dearest to him. His promise to Rādhā-Rāsavihārī that he would build Them a beautiful temple was soon to become a living reality, but he sometimes expressed doubt as to whether he would live to see it. He was now eighty-one and was bothered by certain persistent illnesses.

Of course, the warnings of death were nothing new to Śrīla Prabhupāda, as he had had serious bouts with illness from the beginning of his preaching in the West in 1965. Yet despite his frequent remarks about retiring, his disciples found it difficult to imagine. Yes, they should by all means complete the work as soon as possible and open the Bombay temple, and yes, they should assure Prabhupāda that he could retire and eventually complete his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. But of course, Kṛṣṇa would allow him to remain with them and see the completion of at least these two projects.

Each month, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's G.B.C. men stayed with him to serve as his secretary and to receive direct training and personal association. The secretary for January 1977 was Rāmeśvara Swami. Prabhupāda was genuinely pleased and enlivened when, early in the morning, Rāmeśvara entered his room, having flown straight from Los Angeles to Bombay. Prabhupāda considered Rāmeśvara an expert ISKCON manager, especially in printing and distributing Kṛṣṇa conscious literature, which was Prabhupāda's priority in preaching.

Rāmeśvara Swami inquired as a humble servant before his spiritual master. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "you look well. Are you feeling well?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed. "At the present moment I am feeling well, because you are here."

Within moments they were discussing ISKCON preaching and management, and Prabhupāda advised Rāmeśvara that the best policy was to use money for printing more books. As soon as money accumulated, Prabhupāda warned, it would be taxed and would cause headaches. Better to immediately spend it for printing books.

"Print books and sell and spend," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Follow this policy and distribute these books. That is our main preaching. Somehow or other we must take our books door to door and distribute. Then our preaching is successful. Anyone who will read will get some benefit, that is sure. Because no other such literature is available throughout the whole world. It is a new revolution to the people in general."

When Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for news of ISKCON's activities in the West, Rāmeśvara gave the latest details of how the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in America was being attacked in the courts and press as a psychologically dangerous, brainwashing cult. Śrīla Prabhupāda was already aware of this; it was, in fact, the "conspiracy" he had referred to on his morning walk. An anticult movement was now aggressively active and lumping the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in with other new movements. Śrīla Prabhupāda was well aware of the "deprogrammers'" kidnapping of devotees and intensively coercing them, and he had shown that he was not intimidated by the attack. He assured the devotees that Kṛṣṇa would protect them and that the outcome would ultimately be in their favor.

The most significant battle, one that had concerned Śrīla Prabhupāda for several months, was a legal case in New York where the temple president, Ādi-keśava Swami, was being charged with employing mind control to keep the devotees in the temple. The parents of two adult devotees had pressed charges after hired deprogrammers had failed to break the two devotees' determination for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In a spirit of anticult crusade, an assistant attorney general was prosecuting, using all legal and governmental facilities at his disposal. Although civil libertarians were outraged and assured the devotees that the opposition could never win, the implications of the case were fearful nevertheless. The case challenged the very right of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement to exist as a bona fide religion and challenged the right of adult devotees to remain in the movement against the wishes of their parents. Also at issue was whether members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement were members by their own choosing or were being kept in the movement by psychological

manipulation, "brainwashing." When Śrīla Prabhupāda had first heard of this case, his reply in a letter from Vṛndāvana had been like a clarion call to battle against the forces of illusion.

Regarding the point about whether our movement is bona fide, you can use the following arguments. Bhagavad-gītā has got so many editions. Our books are older than the Bible. In India there are millions of Kṛṣṇa temples. Let the judges and juries read our books and take the opinion of learned scholars and professors. Regarding the second point about the parents' jurisdiction over their children, here are some suggestions. Do the parents like that their children become hippies? Why don't they stop it? Do the parents like their children to become involved in prostitution and intoxication? Why don't they stop this?

They are now feeling the weight of this movement. Formerly they thought, "These people come and go," but now they see we are staying. Now we have set fire. It will go on. It cannot be stopped. You can bring big, big fire brigades but the fire will act. The brain-wash books are already there. Even if they stop externally, internally it will go on. Our first-class campaign is book distribution. Go house to house. The real fighting is now. Kṛṣṇa will give you all protection. So, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and fight.

Sitting with Śrīla Prabhupāda in Bombay, Rāmeśvara Swami informed him that a nationwide committee of professors and theologians had come to the defense of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the New York case and that many lawyers and psychologists were sympathetic.

"It is so much mercy from Kṛṣṇa," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Kṛṣṇa wanted all these things to happen. Kṛṣṇa Himself became important when He killed so many demons, not simply by lying down in the lap of mother Yaśodā. When He was on the lap of mother Yaśodā, from that day He began to kill. Therefore Kṛṣṇa established that He was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So even Kṛṣṇa was not exempted, what to speak of us. Prahlāda Mahārāja was not exempted. As soon as you speak of God, this opposition will come. Jesus Christ was crucified. They are so kind they have not crucified me or my men. But you have to expect all these things. Nityānanda Prabhu was personally injured. Haridāsa Ṭhākura was beaten in twenty-two bazaars. This task is like that."

"They are getting everyone in America to ask the question, 'What is Hare Kṛṣṇa?'" said Rāmeśvara.

"That is our gain," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "They are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa."

"We still have to work very hard to defeat them," Rāmeśvara added. "Oh, yes," said Prabhupāda. "That is necessary. You don't sleep. Never did Kṛṣṇa say to Arjuna, 'I am your friend. I am God. You sleep here. I'll do everything.' No! You must fight! That is wanted. Kṛṣṇa said, 'You fight, and remember Me. Then I'll do everything.' This is an opportunity of remembering Kṛṣṇa always."

Prabhupāda explained that the greatest shock for the materialists was that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement strongly opposed illicit sex, meat-eating, and intoxication. To them, for a person to give up these things was so shocking that they could not accept it was happening because of a genuine spiritual experience. Referring to a previous case, Prabhupāda said, "In Germany they also accused that the old man is sitting in Los Angeles, and he has engaged all these boys in collecting money for

him. They are thinking that way, that I have some mind control power, and I have engaged these men—they are getting the money and I am enjoying."

Śrīla Prabhupāda recalled how, as early as 1969, when his temple in Los Angeles had purchased a few cars and the number of devotees had begun increasing, the neighbors had become envious. Prabhupāda said that he had invited them to also come and live in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness community, but that their reply had always been no. Prabhupāda said that the more the opposition created turmoil, the more Kṛṣṇa consciousness would become famous. He also reasoned that people were reacting to his very strong preaching.

"I condemn everyone," he said, "that they are all dogs and hogs. And the United Nations I called a pack of barking dogs. It's a fact. And in Chicago I said, 'All women, you cannot have freedom.' So I became a subject of great criticism."

Śrīla Prabhupāda concluded his meeting with Rāmeśvara by saying that the devotees should be very alert and intelligently defend the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement; but they should also understand that a higher principle was operating. This opposition indicated the genuineness of ISKCON. Even Kṛṣṇa Himself was sometimes the center of calamitous activities, such as when He fought with Kālīya and other enemies or when, as an infant, He fell into the Yamunā river.

"This is the beauty of Vṛndāvana," said Prabhupāda. "When Kṛṣṇa entered the Yamunā to fight with Kālīya it was not at all good news for mother Yaśodā, Nanda, the friends and family. Not at all. Their life was lost. But still Kṛṣṇa was the center. This is Vṛndāvana. In everything Kṛṣṇa is in the center. So our situation is just like that. They are making bad propaganda against Kṛṣṇa—this is the opposition—but I am happy that Kṛṣṇa is the center. That's all. This is the beauty of this movement. Although we are put into some difficulty, yet the center is Kṛṣṇa."

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to travel with a group of his disciples by train to Allahabad. But when a devotee went to buy tickets, he discovered that all seats had long been purchased; there was no chance of making reservations for Allahabad so close to Kumbha-melā. One of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Bombay friends, however, a Mr. Gupta, held a high position with the Central Railway of India and, at Prabhupāda's request, arranged for a special, private car on a train to Allahabad, exclusively for Prabhupāda and his disciples.

Early on the morning of January 11 Śrīla Prabhupāda embarked on the twenty-four-hour-plus train ride from Bombay to Allahabad. He was sharing his first-class compartment with Rāmeśvara Swami, Jagadīśa, and Hari-śauri, and even as the train pulled out of the station, Prabhupāda was preaching.

Rameśvara mentioned a radio show he had recently been on in California, where a Lutheran minister had said Kṛṣṇa was a sex symbol because He had so many wives and gopīs.

"Even taking it that Kṛṣṇa is after sex," said Prabhupāda, "then if sex is bad, why are they after sex?"

"He says that sex is not for God," Rāmeśvara replied. Śrīla Prabhupāda was sitting on one side of the compartment, and his disciples sat facing him. The loud rattling of the train cars on the rails made conversation sometimes difficult.

"If sex is not there in God," said Prabhupāda, "then how has it come? God created everything. So God did not create sex?" Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that sex exists both in the material world and in the spiritual, material sex enjoyment being a perversion of the original, pure sex that exists in the Supreme. Kṛṣṇa's sexual enjoyment, therefore, is not at all like material sex; it is the exact opposite, in fact, inasmuch as the reality is the opposite of its reflection.

"You do not understand how to face the opposing party," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was in an animated, argumentative mood, enthusiastic to show his disciples how to defeat the opposition. He had sometimes described his own spiritual master as *simha* ("lion")-guru, and they now saw him in a similar fighting spirit. "The more opposition there will be," he said, "the more we have to defend."

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," Rāmeśvara asked, "should we be thinking in our minds that one day the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will have to manage the cities and the nations of the world?"

"Oh, yes," Prabhupāda replied.

Rāmeśvara asked how the devotees could accomplish such a huge, ambitious project. The management would be simplified, Prabhupāda explained, since the citizens would live a pure, natural life. Thus the burdensome, sinful aspects of godless government would become unnecessary, and so many complex problems would be solved. He gave the example of self-sufficient agrarian communities where men earn their livelihood locally. But only by education and by experiencing the higher taste of Kṛṣṇa conscious pleasure, he said, could the masses become satisfied with simple living.

Rāmeśvara asked if America would become Kṛṣṇa conscious by a minority of Kṛṣṇa conscious persons becoming powerful in government, while the masses remained as *karmīs*.

"No," Prabhupāda replied. "You can introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness in such a way that they will become devotees. Suppose in big, big factories we shall introduce this *prasādam* distribution and chanting. They will immediately become devotees. Their hearts will be cleansed: *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*."

"But will it be like Russia," pursued Rāmeśvara, "where there is only a small group of people who are in control?"

"No, it is not like that. The quality of the people will be changed."

"So that means only when the whole mass of population becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious," Rāmeśvara suggested, "then there will be Kṛṣṇa conscious government..."

"No," Prabhupāda corrected. "You can have government when you are in minority. But the mass of people, on account of this quality, they have to see the example."

In one sense these were not immediate concerns—how the devotees would manage the whole world—since the devotees' political influence was at present insignificant. But by answering these questions, Prabhupāda was establishing future goals and tactics for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Rāmeśvara Swami, as both a practical manager and a visionary, wanted to know exactly how Śrīla Prabhupāda saw the Kṛṣṇa conscious world of the future.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had the answers, but he indicated that social or political management would be done not by any new formalities but by pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness, by changing the hearts of the people through chanting, hearing, studying scripture—and then organizing things on the basic principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

As the train passed beyond the heavily populated Bombay area and entered the countryside, Śrīla Prabhupāda looked out the window, appreciating the scenery. "We have come to the open field," he said. "How it is nice. And as long as we were passing through the congested areas—hellish, simply hellish. Now here is open space, how it is nice."

"Entering into a city is so imposing on your consciousness," said Hari-śauri.

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "at that point it is simply rubbish. All papers thrown here and there, and people living in hellish conditions. Now see here how it is open and pleasing. So organize these farm projects."

When Rāmeśvara pointed out that beginning a farm community required a great deal of capital, Prabhupāda simply replied that the devotees should show the example and that others would automatically follow the successful pattern. Rāmeśvara mentioned that in America, although the ISKCON temple presidents were eager to get as many people to join as possible, they found that most people were unable to come up to the required standard.

"Therefore farm," Prabhupāda said.

"They have to be encouraged to have a little bit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in their own home," Rāmeśvara suggested, "—make their home a temple."

Prabhupāda disagreed. "No. Let them go to the farm, New Vrindaban." If the people were disinclined to austerity, he said, then let them come to the farm with their wife and children and live comfortably in their own house. And on the farms they would find plenty of employment. More and more, Prabhupāda said, people would become jobless and would be obliged to take shelter of a Kṛṣṇa conscious farm community.

"So we can expect," said Hari-śauri, "that material conditions are going to become very much worse than at present?"

"They may come or not," said Prabhupāda. "We don't care. Let us establish an ideal society."

Although Prabhupāda had left Bombay without taking breakfast, he continued speaking for four hours and then asked Hari-śauri to serve lunch. The other devotees left the compartment.

Hari-śauri carried all Prabhupāda's personal effects in two small shoulder bags, one with three changes of clothing, the other with Prabhupāda's plate, bowl, spoon, tiffin, tilaka, and mirror. With just these two bags, Prabhupāda was traveling all over the world. Although he was the head of a wealthy, international movement, he kept nothing for himself and traveled light. Whatever donations he collected, whatever profits came from the sale of his books, whatever properties he owned—everything was in the name of ISKCON. And yet when it came time to eat in the middle of that dusty train ride, his servant was able to produce silver bowls and a tray and an elegant vegetarian feast. Although Prabhupāda kept nothing for himself, by Kṛṣṇa's arrangement he was well provided for.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sat cross-legged on the train seat and pointed to what he wanted from the stainless steel tiffin compartments his servant placed before him. There were sabjīs, purīs, fruits, and sweets. After Śrīla Prabhupāda chose what he wanted and began to eat, he insisted that Hari-śauri also take prasādam. When they finished, Hari-śauri distributed the remnants of Prabhupāda's meal to the other devotees, and Prabhupāda lay down to rest.

In the afternoon, more devotees gathered in Prabhupāda's small compartment, and he continued preaching, mostly in reply to points Rāmeśvara Swami raised.

"In regard to brainwashing," said Rāmeśvara, "they claim that our lifestyle tends to take the devotee and isolate him from the world."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "we hate to mix with you. No gentleman tries to mix with loafers. Crows will not like to live with the ducks and white swans, and white swans will not like to live with the crows. That is natural division. Birds of the same feather flock together."

Rāmeśvara: "They have a list of five or six conditions, and they say if all these conditions are present, then it is a suitable atmosphere for brainwashing. They say we are imposing those conditions on our members."

Prabhupāda: "Yes. We are brainwashing from bad to good. That is our business. We are washing the brain from all rascaldom. Your brain is filled up with all rubbish things—meat-eating, illicit sex, gambling. So we are washing them. Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam. Śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa kīrtanaḥ hṛdy antaḥ-stho hy Abhadrāṇi. Abhadrā ṇi means "bad things." So the bad things should be washed. Don't you cleanse your home? Don't you cleanse your room? Is that brainwashing? So if you wash your room very clean, who blames you? But you are so rascal that you charge us, "Why are you washing away this garbage?" We are washing out the garbage, and you are protesting. This is your intelligence. But intelligent men wash away the garbage. That is the law of civilization, to cleanse. That we are doing.

"According to Vedic civilization you are actually untouchable. Now we have come to touch you. Therefore wash—first you must wash. According to Indian civilization the dog is untouchable, but

he is your best friend. So you are untouchable. Therefore, we have to wash your brain. Unless your brain is washed, you cannot understand Kṛṣṇa. Man is known by his company. You sleep with dog, you eat with dog, your best friend is dog, so what you are? You must be washed, scrubbed."

Rāmeśvara: "But this is their argument, that the standard in America is that you become learned in different fields—science, music, art, and literature. This standard of culture and education is coming from the idea of the Renaissance in Europe. But in our Hare Kṛṣṇa movement we are isolating ourselves from these things and simply reading one set of literature—Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda: "This other is not culture. As soon as you change, that means it is not culture. It is mano-dharma, mental concoction. Yes, we want to stop your nonsense. That is our mission. Those who are intelligent, they have taken. And you also take."

Rāmeśvara raised the objection that Kṛṣṇa conscious children are not prepared to go to public schools and universities, and Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that they were being saved.

"But what if they want to change later in their life?" asked Rāmeśvara.

"They have become Kṛṣṇa conscious from the very beginning," Prabhupāda replied. "That is the perfection of life. They are perfect from the very beginning of their life. And you are going to school in the college, but you are becoming most uncivilized—like cats and dogs, becoming naked and having sex on the street. So what is the value of that education? Stop all these colleges and universities. As soon as they are stopped, it is better for human beings."

Rāmeśvara: "They say that if we claim our members are gentlemen, they why is it that they go to the airport and bother so many people?"

Prabhupāda: "They are not bothering. They are educating. When a thief is advised, 'Kindly do not become a thief,' he takes it as botheration. But it is good advice."

Rāmeśvara: "They say it is invasion of privacy. Every man has the right to think the way he wants."

Prabhupāda: "Yes. Therefore I have got the right to think like this and sell books."

Rāmeśvara: "So if I do not want to hear your philosophy, why do you impose it?"

Prabhupāda: "It is not imposing. It is good philosophy. We are canvassing: 'Take it. You will be benefited.' And they are being benefited. Those who are reading, they are being benefited. And why are you advertising—big, big signboards: 'Please come and purchase'? Hmm? Why are you imposing your so-called goodness on us? Why you are doing?"

Back and forth the battle went, hour after hour, Rāmeśvara unleashing all the arguments against the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and Śrīla Prabhupāda defeating them. Prabhupāda called the arguments "childish" and "foolish," and he strongly criticized the materialistic demeanor from which they sprang. By śāstra and logic he proved that the nondevotee has no good qualities and is

less than an animal because of his lack of God consciousness. Such a person, he said, was in no position to criticize, and such criticisms only showed ignorance of the real purpose of human life.

The train stopped in Manmad, Jalgaon, and Khandwa, as well as other small towns and junctions, and for Prabhupāda and his disciples the day passed quickly in discussion. Prabhupāda was absorbed in defending the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He relished fighting on behalf of Lord Caitanya. He was speaking, of course, mainly for the benefit of his disciples, but beyond that, he was expressing his compassion for all beings and his dedication to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

"They are spending so much for military strength," Prabhupāda continued. "They are not performing yajña, so how will there be rainfall? There will be warfare, devastation. It is a most rubbish civilization. They are misleading everyone—soul killing. It is the blind leading the blind. Even when there is difficulty, we have to do this as Kṛṣṇa's business. Let the dogs bark on. We don't care. If we remain sincere to Kṛṣṇa, that is our victory. The external result is not so important. We have to act according to the direction of Kṛṣṇa.

"Of course, we want to see good results, but even if there is no good result, we don't mind. We must be sincere to Kṛṣṇa, that we have done our best without cheating. That is our duty. As servants, we shall not cheat the master—result or no result. The devotee is not sorry if there is no result: 'Never mind.' Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, 'I have brought to Benares the hari-nāma, but here they are all Māyāvādīs. So if it is not accepted, all right. I shall take it back.' But we must do our best canvassing work: 'Please take it.' That is our mission. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare..." Śrīla Prabhupāda's speaking trailed off into chanting japa. He would chant for a while and then bring up another point.

Rāmeśvara Swami continued to stir the controversies, anxious to fortify his own convictions and preaching ability by hearing directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Very often," Rāmeśvara said, "they will say, 'It is not religion that we are concerned with, but it is brainwashing and mind control. You are chanting so many hours a day... ' "

"What is it to you!" Prabhupāda interrupted sharply. "That is my business. Why do you bother yourself?"

Rāmeśvara: "But you are not giving these young people a chance to think when they chant for so many hours."

Prabhupāda: "You are thieves. You are coming to kidnap. Why shall I give you a chance? They are chanting, but you are charging brainwash. You ask them don't chant—that is your business. But that you cannot do."

Rāmeśvara: "But they say that takes away freedom to think."

Prabhupāda: "That is controversy. But you want to take his freedom, and still you are accusing us."

Prabhupāda said that first there should be a test of what is genuine religion. "We say," said Prabhupāda, "that the law given by God is religion. And it does not matter what name is given to God. If we say 'Kṛṣṇa,' that does not mean that He is not God. So before there is a challenge to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there should be an assembly discussion and decision as to what is genuine religion. We say that God is one, and whatever He has given as law, that is religion."

Rāmeśvara: "But the Christians say that according to the Bible, if God wanted us to believe in Kṛṣṇa He would have told us on Mount Sinai, and He would have told us through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, 'I am the only way.' "

Prabhupāda: "That's all right. But Jesus Christ did not explain more to you because you are rascals. You cannot follow even his one instruction, 'Thou shalt not kill.' It is not the foolishness of Jesus Christ. But because you are so rascal, you cannot understand him. Therefore he avoided you rascals. Because whatever he said, you cannot follow. So what you will understand? Therefore he stopped speaking."

Rāmeśvara: "They also say that you are ruining family life."

Prabhupāda: "That's all right. We are entering Kṛṣṇa's family."

Hari-śauri: "But if you are actually followers of God, why are you breaking up the families? Shouldn't you have love for everyone?"

Rāmeśvara: "One of the commandments is that one shall honor thy father and mother."

Prabhupāda replied that a devotee loves his mother and father by teaching them Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Hari-śauri: "My mother testified to that. When I was at home she said I was impossible to live with. When she saw me afterwards, I was very nice."

Prabhupāda: "Many. Hayagrīva's father and mother also."

Rāmeśvara: "My parents think like that too. I could have no relationship with them before, but now that I am a devotee, I actually want to help them."

Prabhupāda: "There are so many fathers and mothers who appreciate. None of our disciples are disrespectful to mother and father. Why? I never said you become disrespectful to your father and mother. At Brahmānanda's initiation, his mother was standing there and I instructed Brahmānanda, 'Take the dust of your mother's feet first, then you offer me obeisances.' So first of all he offered his obeisances to his mother. I told him, 'You have got good mother. Otherwise, how she has got a son like you?' I always say like that. I never say disrespect. In a particular case, if the father and mother are demons, he must give up their association. But we never said break up the family."

Rāmeśvara: "I think we've used up all our arguments."

Prabhupāda (still eager to argue): "First of all you said that we are depriving of food. Where is this?"

Rāmeśvara: "Yes, this is their argument, that we only let devotees eat twice a day. And there is no meat and very little protein."

Prabhupāda: "That depends on him. If he likes to eat that kind of food, you have no right to force. Then you are turning to force. There are different persons, and they like different types of food. If he likes twice a day, why do you insist thrice? That is his choice."

Rāmeśvara: "And sleeping only four or five hours—very little."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, because it is a waste of time."

Rameśvara: "But this makes his mind very weak."

Prabhupāda: "You rascal! You have nothing to do—you sleep! Napoleon used to sleep for one hour, two hours—he was such a busy man. So they are so busy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Every great man does not sleep very much. Sleeping is simply a waste of time. If he does not sleep more, it is a sign of greatness."

When Rāmeśvara Swami argued that the opposition has psychologists to testify against us, Prabhupāda replied, "We have got our psychologists."

After talking all afternoon and into the night, Prabhupāda told the devotees to rest. At ten P.M. he lay down, and Hari-śauri massaged his legs. "Actually," Śrīla Prabhupāda concluded, "their arguments are not very sound. Therefore it is simply a plan of Kṛṣṇa's to help give us some prominence. It will make us more well known." Opposition, he said, was just an opportunity to preach. But to deal properly with the legal cases and other serious opposition, the devotees would have to know how to preach. And they would have to be spiritually strong. He was readying his men, speaking to them day and night on the twenty-four-hour train ride to Allahabad.

Allahabad

January 12

They arrived at nine A.M., and half a dozen of Śrīla Prabhupāda's sannyāsī disciples, along with a kīrtana party of about fifty devotees, were there to greet him. They had brought Prabhupāda's car down from Delhi, and he rode the short distance from the station to the Melā site. Thousands of pilgrims, on foot and in rickshas, crowded the streets, making Prabhupāda's progress by car slow. Finally the road ended, but the traffic continued onto the sandy flats surrounding the Trivenī (confluence of the rivers Sarasvatī, Gaṅgā, and Yamunā). Here, within a few days, a city of tents had sprung up. Two million had camped already, with millions more arriving daily. Every spiritual group in India had its bamboo-fenced compound of tents.

As the car inched along, Prabhupāda smiled to see a group of his disciples strolling among the camps and performing hari-nāma kīrtana. But not until he passed through the congested main area of camps to the far end of the Trivenī did he reach the ISKCON camp. The ISKCON tents, most of which had been erected about half an hour before Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival, were located near a railway bridge on an island called Gaṅgādvīpa; and the Trivenī bathing area was a twenty-minute walk away. The festival organizers had provided simple outdoor toilets, water taps, and a "kitchen," consisting of a cloth partition, a hole in the ground, and some bricks.

It was, as Śrīla Prabhupāda had expected, the usual Kumbha-melā austerity, but he was displeased with the camp's remote location. And when he heard that the electric lines did not reach their area, he became even more displeased. How could people come to the program in the evening if there were no lights? He called for Bhāgavata and Guru dāsa, who were in charge of organizing the ISKCON camp.

"Who got this land?" he yelled.

"When I got here," said Bhāgavata, "it was an empty field. They told me, 'We are putting you on this island. The governor is there, Kalapatri Mahārāja is there, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is there.' I thought you were there with all the leading personalities."

Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed. "You are inexperienced, so they cheated you. All right, you did not know."

But later, when he heard that Bhāgavata and Guru dāsa had not obtained enough food for mass distribution, he became angry. Again he called for Bhāgavata.

"Why is there no prasādam distribution tonight?" he demanded.

"Well, Prabhupāda," Bhāgavata stuttered, "I don't know. They didn't buy any food."

"Why have they not bought?" Prabhupāda was angry. "What is the matter with you? You Americans are big spenders—simply wasting money. You have no stock of food. Why you did not stock rice, dāl, and wheat? Why you have no stock? What is the matter with you? You have no brain. You spend five rupees' cab fare going, five rupees' cab fare coming back, and you buy one rupee of rice. This is your mentality. You are nonsense! Every time you need something you go to the store and buy it. You don't know how to buy sufficiently one time and then use it. You cannot think like that. And why have you made this location under the elevated train? Why have you done this wrong? The train is making noise. This paṇḍāl is a failure. Food is not being distributed." After twenty minutes of reprimanding, Prabhupāda dismissed Bhāgavata.

A little later Prabhupāda called for Bhāgavata again. "Bhāgavata Mahārāja," he began, although Bhāgavata was not a sannyāsī, "if you can just get the lights on, then you will be doing good. Can you do that?" Bhāgavata said he could, and by that night the ISKCON camp had lights, although, as at all the other camps, the power was frequently shut off.

Only a few people visited the ISKCON paṇḍāl the first night; the weather was cold, damp, and windy. Śrīla Prabhupāda chose to sit up all night at his desk rather than lie in the cold bed. Wearing all his clothes—sweaters, a hooded coat, a cādar, and gloves—he sat at his desk in the darkness. A kerosene heater did little to drive the chill from the tent. Rāmeśvara Swami sat up much of the night too, relighting the heater's pilot light, which blew out every few minutes as the wind swept through the tent.

By morning, Śrīla Prabhupāda had a bad cold with runny nose and eyes. He did not go to the river for bathing but used the icy water from the pump next to his tent. His hands and feet were swollen, something that had happened to him before during illness. When the devotees suggested he not stay at the camp, Prabhupāda insisted; he wanted to preach. People were beginning to discover his location and come to see him, so he wanted to stay and preach. Kumbha-melā, he said, was an opportunity for the devotees to preach, not merely to bathe in the Gaṅgā.

The devotees crowded into Śrīla Prabhupāda's tent for guru-pūjā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class. They had no garland for him, but he said nothing about it. By the time he had ended his short lecture, the sun had risen. He asked Hari-śauri to put the cot outdoors, where he rested and later took massage in the sunshine.

During his massage, Prabhupāda looked over at the railroad bridge and said that he remembered this bridge from his former days in Allahabad. He said that his father had been cremated under the bridge on the same island of Gaṅgādvīpa in 1930.

That afternoon, a group of devotees arrived from Māyāpur, and some of them immediately complained to Prabhupāda about how poorly managed the ISKCON paṇḍāl seemed to be. Prabhupāda asked them to try to salvage the program by distributing as many books as possible, so the devotees began distributing Hindi editions of Prabhupāda's books.

The devotees took their chanting and book distributing down the main road, where they came upon the camps of different Śaivites, who sat around their fires wearing only kaupīnas (loincloths). Many of them, their hair matted, their bodies covered with ashes, were puffing heavily on hashish in chilam pipes. Nearby, on the other side of the road, were the camps of Vaiṣṇavas from the Rāmānuja sampradāya. Though they were also tyāgīs (renunciates), and their appearance was similar to the Śaivites', they were more friendly; they were glad to see the devotees and shouted out, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma."

The devotees were amazed by the piety of the millions of pilgrims. On seeing the kīrtana party approach, many people offered prostrated obeisances. Others rolled on the ground, or picked up dust where the devotees had walked and put it in their mouths. And although many of the pilgrims were poor, they came forward and dropped at least a few paisa into the pot carried by one of the devotees. Anyone who gave a rupee would receive a book, and the books became so popular that people would come and ask for them by name. Some people threw money, and the sannyāsīs would catch it in their topcloths, which they would hold out like aprons. By the end of the day, the devotees had distributed about seven thousand pieces of literature.

On the second night, Śrīla Prabhupāda again sat up, while Rāmeśvara Swami tried futilely to keep the heater going. Hari-śauri had placed Śrīla Prabhupāda's dictating equipment on the desk, but Prabhupāda did not touch it.

January 14, Śrīla Prabhupāda's third day in Allahabad, was the first day of Kumbha-melā bathing and would be a special opportunity for book distribution. An ISKCON chanting party of about fifty men and several Indian gurukula boys was very well received as they traveled throughout the Melā area. At one-thirty P.M., the time of auspicious bathing, the kīrtana party made its way to the Trivenī. As they approached, the police cleared a path for them all the way to the water. By evening they had distributed eight thousand books, and for the first time since they had arrived, Prabhupāda expressed his pleasure at their success. He ordered some of the sannyāsīs to stay at the Melā until all the books were distributed.

The next morning, despite ill health, Prabhupāda took a walk. Surrounded by about twenty-five disciples, he walked slowly. Although he was a small figure surrounded by tall sannyāsīs, the Kumbha-melā pilgrims were able to easily recognize his preeminent position, and they would break through the ranks of devotees and offer daṇḍavats before him. When Prabhupāda saw people approaching, he would stop walking and let them touch his feet, despite the objections of his disciples. He was already sick, and he had explained in his books that a devotee can become ill if sinful people touch his feet. Still, he did not object.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was scheduled to stay at the Melā through January 21, but his disciples pressed him to go to a place more suitable for his health. Rarely had any of them seen him so sick, and they worried. "But my only ambition," said Prabhupāda, "is that so many people can become enlightened."

Word was beginning to circulate that Śrīla Prabhupāda, the guru of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, was staying in a camp on Gaṅgādvīpa, and more people were starting to come to see him. He said that the people coming to the Kumbha-melā were expecting all the holy men and spiritual teachers of India to be there, so he felt obligated to stay until the 21st.

Rāmeśvara Swami tried to advise Prabhupāda. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "there is something much more important than your giving darśana to these people, and that is your writing of your books. Only a few thousand people are going to see you here, but if you go on writing, we will distribute your books by the millions. Then millions of people will have your darśana. There is no facility for writing here. The climate is too cold, and your health is weak. Let's go on to Bhubaneswar, where it's warm and they have healthy water."

Śrīla Prabhupāda had previously mentioned Bhubaneswar because of the water of Bindu-sarovara, which was supposed to have special medicinal properties. And he liked the argument that his writing was more important than his remaining in Allahabad to benefit a few thousand pilgrims. For the devotees on his personal staff—his secretary, servant, and cook—to see Prabhupāda going through such austerities while suffering ill health was very painful.

Finally Prabhupāda agreed to go. He called in Guru dāsa and Bhāgavata and gave them a final verbal chastising for the mismanaged paṇḍāl. Then, on the afternoon of the 15th, he prepared to leave.

Rāmeśvara Swami and Guru dāsa went to the train station to purchase tickets, but they found that no seats would be available for weeks. Seeking special consideration, they visited the local railway office, a lavishly appointed remodeled railway car. There they happened to meet their friend from Bombay, Mr. Gupta, and they told him of Prabhupāda's illness and of his desire to leave at once for Calcutta.

Mr. Gupta phoned Bombay and arranged for a first-class coach to be added to a train coming from Bombay to Allahabad. The devotees profusely thanked Mr. Gupta, who began proposing that Śrīla Prabhupāda travel throughout India in a royal car like the one they were in. The devotees discussed with him about how they might buy or lease such a car, and it seemed an interesting possibility. But the immediate miracle had been arranged: a coach to take Prabhupāda out of the crowded throngs of Kumbha-melā to Calcutta.

After a difficult car ride, inching along through the crowds from the Trivenī to the train station, Prabhupāda and his party finally arrived at the railway station, where government men helped him and his disciples with their luggage and saw to their comfort. From the devotees' point of view, this was the proper respect for a pure devotee of the Lord, the most important person in the world; yet such treatment was rare. Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased, and he asked his secretary to type a letter, thanking Mr. Gupta, who was caring for Prabhupāda "just like a father looking after a son." He invited Mr. Gupta and his family to attend the upcoming Gaura-pūrṇimā festival in Māyāpur.

During the train ride to Calcutta, Śrīla Prabhupāda reiterated his displeasure with the mismanaged ISKCON paṇḍāl at Kumbha-melā. Thousands of guests were coming to the Hare Kṛṣṇa paṇḍāl without receiving prasādam. Determined that the bad example not be repeated, he dictated a letter, "To All ISKCON Temple Presidents."

Please accept my blessings. Now you must arrange in each temple there must be sufficient stock of prasadam for distribution. You can keep first-class cooks, two or three, and they should be always engaged. Whenever any guest comes, he must get prasād. This arrangement must be made, that the cooks prepare ten-twenty servings at a time, of puris and sabji, and then you can add halavah and pakoras and the visitors may be supplied immediately. Whenever a gentleman comes, he must be served. As the twenty servings are being distributed, immediately the cooks prepare another twenty servings and store it. At the end of the day if no one comes, our own men will take, so there is no loss. You cannot say, "It is finished," "It is not cooked yet," "There is no supply for cooking," etc. This must be enforced rigidly.

The temple is managed by Srimati Radharani, Laksmiji; so why should there be want? Our philosophy is, if anyone comes, let him take prasād, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and be happy. Everything is being supplied by Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is not poor, so why should we deny them? This should be done at any cost. There is no difficulty. It simply requires nice management. At the end of the day you may sell or give away. If we believe that Kṛṣṇa is providing for and maintaining everyone, then why should we be misers? This means losing faith in Kṛṣṇa and thinking that we are the doers and

suppliers. We are confident Kṛṣṇa will supply! Let the whole world come. We can feed them. So please do this nicely. Begin at once.

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked to hear the reviews of his books, as published in *The Krishna Consciousness Movement Is Authorized*. His secretary read one review after another—professors praising Prabhupāda's work and requesting him to go on producing such valuable books. After hearing the reviews, Prabhupāda lay down to rest. "The pen is mightier than the sword!" Rāmeśvara Swami declared.

"Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda answered. "It is a revolution. That is what I thought as I wrote on and on. The Communists have changed the lives of people throughout the world by their empty literature and false promises. Why not a revolution started on the basis of the absolute knowledge?"

January 18, 1977

After the intense cold of Kumbha-melā, Prabhupāda had recuperated a couple of days in Calcutta. His head cold had gone away, but the swelling in his hands and feet persisted, as did other maladies. Externally, he was diabetic and suffered from poor digestion, as well as from the general dwindling of physical powers common to an eighty-one-year-old body. His condition was not suited for continual travel, hard work, frequent lectures, and taxing management.

Yet Prabhupāda was transcendental to his apparent material condition. Although sometimes he would inquire about cures, mostly he was callous toward his poor health. Even after receiving a doctor's advice or concluding himself what was good for his health, he would often ignore it in favor of what he thought was best for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Previously, in Vṛndāvana he had felt better by drinking the fresh well water, so he thought he might also get relief by drinking the water of the famous Bindu-sarovara near Bhubaneswar. Besides, ISKCON had recently acquired a small donated plot of land outside the city, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's Oriyan disciple Gaura-govinda Swami had gone there, constructed two simple dwellings, and was making plans to build a temple.

The train journey from Calcutta to Bhubaneswar was twelve hours, another opportunity for Rāmeśvara Swami to probe. His thirty-day assignment as Prabhupāda's secretary was almost over, and then he would return to Los Angeles and his American BBT duties. He had come to India set on inquiring from Prabhupāda about whether there would be world war and, if so, how book distribution would continue and how in the future a new world order of Kṛṣṇa consciousness would be introduced. Prabhupāda had answered many of his questions, but there were always more.

The Puri Express left Calcutta around ten P.M. After taking a massage, Śrīla Prabhupāda stretched out on the lower bunk to rest, and Hari-śauri and Rāmeśvara took the two bunks opposite him. Around midnight Prabhupāda turned on his light, sat up, and began chanting softly on his beads. Within a few minutes, Rāmeśvara awoke and, seeing his spiritual master sitting up, paid obeisances and also sat up, waiting expectantly. Immediately Prabhupāda began to speak about the inevitability of war between Russia and America. Even if America took to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the war would be inevitable—the only way to stop the godlessness of Communism. When Rāmeśvara asked if that war would be within his lifetime, Prabhupāda said it was difficult to say. It depended,

he said, on the devotees' distribution of books and Back to Godhead magazines. Although in Russia the government tried to strictly control all literature, Kṛṣṇa conscious books were entering nonetheless and were immediately becoming popular. The Communist leaders were becoming fearful, but they also had some respect for Indian culture. Prabhupāda said that by increasing book distribution, America, and thereafter the whole world, would become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

"So you have to push on more and more," he said. "This opposition, brainwashing charges, means they are recognizing this as a culture. They may like it or not, but they recognize it as something permanent."

Prabhupāda said he had no political aim, but he knew that Indian culture coupled with American money could save the world. "You must think in terms of the whole world," he said. "Not just one nation. That is our preaching. That is the duty of the G.B.C."

The talk went on for more than two hours, and Rāmeśvara felt completely satisfied by the intimate instructions. Although he had once before asked some of the same questions about book distribution and the war, Prabhupāda had chosen not to answer. But now he revealed some of his thoughts, just as a father instructing a trustworthy son.

Conditions on the ISKCON land in Bhubaneswar were primitive: two small mud-walled huts with thatched roof. Śrīla Prabhupāda occupied one eight-by-twelve room in one of the cottages, and his servant and secretary stayed just on the other side of the wall. Electricity had been installed on the land a few days before, so Hari-śauri had placed an electric lamp and the dictating machine on Prabhupāda's desk.

The second small building, about twenty-five feet from Prabhupāda's hut, was a tiny temporary temple room. A shabby canvas roof spanned the open area between the two buildings, and Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana was beneath this, arranged so he could lecture at outdoor gatherings. Two rented tents also stood on the land, to accommodate visiting devotees during Prabhupāda's stay. Prabhupāda's outdoor toilet facilities, about twenty-five feet behind his hut, consisted of a latrine and a separate area for bathing.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not mind the primitive facilities; in fact, he liked them. Although he was ill and for personal comfort could have been residing in his choice of comfortable buildings in the West—a manor in London, a castle in Paris, a penthouse apartment in New York City—he felt perfectly at home and happy living in a primitive mud-and-thatched hut on a secluded patch of land in the dust of Orissa.

Sitting on the outdoor vyāsāsana, Prabhupāda spoke to a small gathering of devotees and some local villagers. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he said, had two favorite places: Bengal and Orissa. And in Orissa (Jagannātha Purī) He spent the last eighteen years of His life. He went to Vṛndāvana and South India but then returned here to stay with His personal associates, Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya, Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, and Śikhī Māhiti. Prabhupāda quoted a scriptural reference indicating that the spiritual movement for this age will begin from Utkala, or Orissa. Śrīla Prabhupāda said Orissa was very special to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, and his own Guru Mahārāja was also born here, at Purī. "Now we have got a little place here," he said. "It doesn't matter if it takes time, but slowly

but surely we can develop this center. Especially since Bhubaneswar is going to be the capital of Orissa. In the future many tourists will come to see other attractions of Orissa. Now it is up to the Oriyans to develop this idea."

Prabhupāda spoke with Gaura-govinda Swami and told him to begin advertising—private meetings in the afternoon and a regular lecture-kīrtana-prasādam program at night. That evening very few visitors came. ISKCON had done little preaching in Orissa, and Prabhupāda was not as well known. Mostly local farmers, villagers, and poor children came—for the free prasādam. Prabhupāda told the audience that he could speak in three languages—English, Bengali, and Hindi—but not Oṛiyā. He therefore decided to speak in English and have Gaura-govinda translate. He would speak a few sentences and then pause while Gaura-govinda gave the Oṛiyā.

"In this material world," said Prabhupāda during his evening lecture, "always the attempt is to defy the supremacy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. At the present moment the so-called scientists' only business is how to defy the supremacy of God. Naturally this movement has to face many impediments, because at the present moment the whole world is practically godless. Even in our country, in India, where Bhagavad-gītā was spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa—even here the same attempt is going on. Big, big scholars, big, big politicians, they take Bhagavad-gītā in their hand to show that they are great authorities in Bhagavad-gītā. But they are presenting commentation just to defy Kṛṣṇa." Prabhupāda spoke for about ten minutes. There were no questions.

Bhubaneswar's hot days and cool nights just suited Prabhupāda. After resting for a few hours, he rose and began translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. It was the first time he had done so since leaving Bombay for Kumbha-melā. He was nearing the end of the Ninth Canto.

Gaura-govinda Mahārāja had scheduled a cornerstone-laying ceremony for a new temple on February 2, the appearance day of Lord Nityānanda. Prabhupāda agreed to stay until then and leave the next morning.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's failing health prevented him from eating fried foods. His expert cooks in Bhubaneswar, Pālikā-devī dāsī and Śrutirūpā-devī dāsī, carefully prepared meals that were nutritious and tasty but without ghee. Sometimes, however, he specifically requested certain fried foods but would later complain that they didn't agree with him.

Rāmeśvara Swami, Gargamuni Swami, and Bhavānanda Goswami were sitting with Śrīla Prabhupāda in his hut discussing deprogramming cases with him. They were saying that these enemies of ISKCON were so fanatical that for Śrīla Prabhupāda to go to America would be dangerous. Śrīla Prabhupāda interrupted, however, changing the subject. "Our immediate problem," he said, "is toward my health. I am not digesting food. Therefore there is some swelling in the hands and the legs."

"Is it affecting your translation work?" asked Rāmeśvara Swami.

"That it has not affected," said Prabhupāda. "It is going on. I have translated seventeen volumes. That may not be affected." He reached over and turned on the dictating machine, and they heard a few seconds of his most recent dictation from the twenty-fourth chapter of the Ninth Canto.

"We know you have a very low opinion of doctors," said Rāmeśvara Swami.

"I wish to die without a doctor," Prabhupāda said. "I may be seriously ill, but don't call a doctor. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Don't be disturbed. Everyone has to die. Let us die peacefully, without doctor. All this medicine, injections, and prohibitions, this, that. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and depend on Kṛṣṇa. Nārtasya cāgadam udanvati... that is Prahlāda Mahārāja's verse. Find out this—Seventh Canto." Hari-śauri reached to Prabhupāda's bookcase for the Seventh Canto, Volume Two, of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Within a few moments he found the verse and read aloud:

"My Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, O Supreme, because of a bodily conception of life, embodied souls neglected and not cared for by You cannot do anything for their betterment. Whatever remedies they accept, although perhaps temporarily beneficial, are certainly impermanent. For example, a father and mother cannot protect their child, a physician and medicine cannot relieve a suffering patient, and a boat on the ocean cannot protect a drowning man."

"These are facts," said Prabhupāda.

"That's ultimately, " said Gargamuni Swami. "But maybe we could give you some temporary relief. Because when you are ill, we feel—"

"Yes," Prabhupāda conceded. "But no severe treatment should be accepted. Better not to take. Better to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Bhavānanda. "In the past, when your health was not good, they have begun chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in all the temples around the world—a special additional kīrtana. Perhaps we could institute that."

"No," said Prabhupāda, "not for my health. You do your kīrtana ordinary. That first stroke on Second Avenue, that was almost fatal. You were present, I think?" Prabhupāda turned to Gargamuni, and they reminisced about the stroke in 1967.

Hari-śauri said a homeopathic doctor had just prescribed some special medicine, and Prabhupāda agreed to try it. Gargamuni said that his father used to have a similar swelling, but his had been due to diabetes. "I have diabetes," said Prabhupāda. Gargamuni Swami said his father used to give himself an insulin injection every morning. "There are many gentlemen who take insulin at least once a day," said Prabhupāda, although he obviously had no intentions of doing so.

Prabhupāda's main health program was his diet, but even in that he was not very strict. An Indian cook named Shantilal was present in Bhubaneswar, and he used a lot of spices and ghee in cooking for Gargamuni Swami and his men. Sometimes Prabhupāda would ask for some of what Shantilal had cooked, and this greatly disturbed Prabhupāda's servants and cooks, although they could do

nothing about it. Gargamuni had also been ill recently, and when Prabhupāda first saw him with his cook Shantilal, he had said, "I thought you were sick."

"Yes," Gargamuni had replied, "but still I have to eat. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are eating very simply. You are not eating spiced food?"

"Sometimes I also have to have spices," Prabhupāda replied. "Otherwise there is no taste. And without that taste, what is the use of life?" Then in a joking spirit Prabhupāda and Gargamuni Swami commiserated, saying they were not going to stop eating tasty prasādam.

"We'd rather die," laughed Gargamuni Swami, and Prabhupāda also laughed.

On his last day as Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary in India, Rāmeśvara Swami entered Prabhupāda's hut and inquired again about war in the future.

"You have mentioned several times," he began, "that there is a conflict which is inevitable between Russia and America."

"No," said Prabhupāda. "If they understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness, both of them, then there will be no conflict. Now we are publishing in Russian."

When Rāmeśvara asked what would happen if many cities were bombed, Prabhupāda said that people would come to their senses and adopt a simpler, agrarian life, just as the ISKCON farm communities were demonstrating. "That will be a good lesson for them," said Prabhupāda.

"So is this conflict part of the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

"Oh, yes. Paritrāṇāya sādhūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām.* To conflict means to finish their sinful activities—finished. Stop it."

"So after the conflict there will be an opportunity to influence people?"

"We shall take every opportunity," said Prabhupāda. "We are the best opportunists. Anukūlyena kṛṣṇa. This is anukūla—favorable for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness—and we shall immediately accept it. It doesn't matter what it is. We do not depend on the public opinion, that this is good or this is bad. Good means if it is favorable for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Rāmeśvara said that it seemed the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would have to grow much more before it could actually be as influential as Prabhupāda was indicating

"It will grow," said Prabhupāda. "It is growing. Simply our workers should be very sincere and strict, and it will grow. Nobody can object. That's a fact. Simply we have to be very strict and sincere, and nobody can check."

"We will be the only ones who have any vision of what to do after the war," said Rāmeśvara.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "We have got clear vision. We are not putting any theory. We are always presenting fact, and that is materializing. Just like we started our farm communities. It is materializing gradually. It is not yet fully organized. Still there is hope that it will give peace to the people. There is sufficient hope."

After a few days, more of the people of Bhubaneswar began to visit Śrīla Prabhupāda. One evening he was in his room speaking with several men when one of them asked, "Well, Swamiji, actually what is God?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda opened his eyes widely in disbelief. "What is this?" he said. "You are from India, and you do not know what is God? This is the degradation of Kali-yuga." Śrīla Prabhupāda continued his sharp criticism and then explained that Indians have the special benefit of Vedic literature and culture; therefore, every Indian should know God.

Prabhupāda gave his first public lecture the next evening, and about 150 people attended. He began his lecture, "Last night some gentleman questioned, 'What is God?' " Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that Śrī Bhagavān personally appears in "our country," Bhārata-varṣa, and leaves His instructions, which have been accepted by the ācāryas. India, Prabhupāda explained, is especially favored, since God personally incarnates there and imparts His instructions. "But at the present moment," Prabhupāda continued, "our young men are inquiring, 'What is God?' So why has this happened? It has happened because we are making progress toward animal civilization".

Anyone with a bodily conception of the self, Prabhupāda said—anyone thinking of his identity in relation to family, country, or race—was no better than a cow or an ass, according to Vedic śāstra. He repeatedly warned that Indians should be careful of sinking to the position of having to ask what is God. Unfortunately, when he called for questions after his lecture, it was the same thing.

"I want to know the meaning of the word Kṛṣṇa," a man asked.

"You do not know what is the meaning of Kṛṣṇa?" Prabhupāda retorted. "You do not know?"

The man said something in Oriya and then said in English, "The etymological meaning."

"Kṛṣṇa," said Prabhupāda, "means all-attractive. Kṛṣ, karṣati. Yes, Kṛṣṇa means the attractive, all-attractive. And besides that, you do not know Kṛṣṇa? That is the difficulty, that our people have become so degraded that they are asking what is God, what is Kṛṣṇa. Someone has studied the Seventh Canto of Rāmāyaṇa, but now he is asking, 'Whose father is Sītā?' So this is the position. We are born in the country where Kṛṣṇa spoke everything, and now we are asking, 'What is the meaning of Kṛṣṇa? What is God?' This is the position, very degraded position."

While Prabhupāda rode in his car to the park for his morning walk, he saw billboards and banners announcing that Sanjay Gandhi was coming to town. Sanjay Gandhi's particular political platform was that everyone should become literate. Looking out the window at the poor, barren land, Prabhupāda said, "What is the benefit of literacy when the people are poor and starving?" He said that the local people were coming to the ISKCON evening program just to get a little kicharī—not because it was prasādam, but because they were hungry. So if after many years of education they

learned to read but still earned little money and had the same employment, then what was the benefit? Life was not for such education. Prabhupāda lamented that so much land was lying uncultivated.

Seeing several men jogging, Prabhupāda commented that most people were hungry and poor while a few were living in big houses, overeating, and running to lose fat. "So he will educate the people," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "and after some time they will join the Naxalite movement and kill the rich man. No. Everyone should be engaged in working the land." Prabhupāda said his ISKCON men should also work, because unless they were properly engaged they would gossip and fall victim to sex desire.

Since arriving in Bhubaneswar, Śrīla Prabhupāda had several times talked about going to Jagannātha Purī, about an hour away. Since he had hopes of one day building a big center in Purī, he wanted to see some plots of land for sale. He hadn't been to Purī, he said, since 1958. Since his Western disciples were not allowed to enter the Jagannātha temple, Prabhupāda said he would not enter either. But he would go to Purī to see what land was available.

Early one morning Prabhupāda set out in his car for Purī, on the Bay of Bengal. He looked at several properties there, but either their locations were poor or the buildings were deteriorated, or both. Prabhupāda walked along the beach with his men, and the surf was pounding. "I was jumping here," he laughed. "In 1920 or '21 I came here. At that time I was married. I was married in 1918. I came after appearing for my B.A. examination. And because I was jubilant, I was jumping. When the waves came I was jumping. Now it is fifty-seven years after. They say we do not change bodies, but where is that body? Now I am walking with stick. Then I was jumping. I am still here. I remember. But the body has changed. What is the difficulty to understand? I am the same. Otherwise, how I am remembering all these things? But that body is now lost. Tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ. Why this simple philosophy these rascals cannot understand?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed a day at the beachside Tourist Bungalow, and one of his Godbrothers, Śyāmasundara Brahmācārī, from the local Purusottama Gaudiya Math visited. After he left, Sri Sevasiva Rath, a member of the pūjārī committee of the Jagannātha temple, also came to visit. Prabhupāda spoke to him about the possibility of ISKCON devotees entering the Jagannātha temple. To bar the Western Vaiṣṇavas from entering the temple was prejudiced and ignorant. Since the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement were fully engaged in spiritual life, they should not be considered unfit simply because of their birth status or race. Sevasiva Rath was friendly and agreed with Śrīla Prabhupāda; he promised he would do what he could to help. He also told Prabhupāda about a book he had just published and invited him to attend a small paṇḍāl meeting the next evening, at which the book would be inaugurated. Prabhupāda agreed.

Later, Prabhupāda was sitting on the veranda outside his room at the Tourist Bungalow. As he sat watching Shantilal preparing lunch in the back of Gargamuni's van, he could smell the aromatic spices cooking in the ghee. He called to Gargamuni Swami and asked that a plate of Shantilal's cooking be brought to him. Soon Prabhupāda was enjoying a meal of rice, dāl, purīs, spicy sabjīs, and chutney. He said that Shantilal cooked wonderfully and that all devotees in ISKCON should learn this art. If the meat-eaters could take such prasādam, he said, they would give up their sinful habit.

As Prabhupāda sat in his hotel room that evening with a few disciples at his feet, he reminisced about how he had come to America in 1965 and had suffered two heart attacks at sea. “They say that anyone who gets a third heart attack,” said Prabhupāda, “they must expire. I had two attacks on the ship, and then in New York a third one—paralyzed. Left side was paralyzed. I do not know how I was saved. And one girl, that captain's wife, she studied astrology. She said, “Swami, if you can survive your seventieth year, then you will live for one hundred years.' ”

Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples laughed.

“So,” Prabhupāda continued, “somehow or other I have survived my seventieth year. I do not know whether... They say I will live for a hundred years. But seventieth year was severe. Three heart attacks and paralysis. And I was without any family. At that time none of you were with me. I was alone. I wasn't dependent on anyone. But on the ship I saw that Kṛṣṇa was going to save me. I was going for His mission.”

Devotees were regularly bringing up the topics of brainwashing and deprogramming. That evening, one of the devotees mentioned that sometimes the opposition was taking the testimony of an exdisciple of Prabhupāda's, who would speak against the movement.

“Because he is a rascal,” Prabhupāda explained, “therefore he is ex communicated. My Guru Mahārāja kicked him out. So what is the value of his testimony? That is natural that someone will go out and speak against us. These things will happen in preaching. You cannot expect very smooth path.” The devotees agreed, and someone added that one of Jesus' closest disciples had betrayed him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda compared the present trouble to the troubles he had encountered when he first came to America. He reminisced further about his near fatal illness in 1967 and his return to India, where he had recuperated. But even after returning to America, he commented, he had not been able to sleep at night because of a sound in his ear.

“As long as the body will be there,” Prabhupāda said, “there will be so many troubles. Kṛṣṇa has advised that they will come and go. Don't care for it. Āgamāpāyino 'nityās tāms titikṣasva bhārata. So bodily troubles, mental troubles, and enemies—so many impediments will come. What can be done? We have to tolerate. That is the material world. We cannot expect smooth, very happy. That is not possible. Kṛṣṇa was advising that to Arjuna, what to speak of us. Kṛṣṇa never says, “I have made some magic. You will have nothing to suffer.’ He never gave Arjuna any tablet. So we have to follow that. The modern gurus say, “I will give you some magic ash. There will be no trouble.’ But Kṛṣṇa, what did He say? He said, “No, tolerate.’ He did not say, “You are ass. I will give you some ash.’ Neither did Arjuna ask, “Why do You ask me to fight? Give me some ash. I'll throw it.’ He was not such a fool that he asked some magic from Kṛṣṇa to kill his enemies. Actually he fought. This is Bhagavad-gītā. So face things as they are, and depend on Kṛṣṇa. That is our duty. Don't expect any ash, miracle, magic.”

The next morning, from the porch, Śrīla Prabhupāda was watching the devotees swimming in the Bay of Bengal. Calling Hari-śauri over, he said he would like to bathe in the ocean and asked him

what he thought about it. Hari-śauri and the other devotees present all thought it was a good idea. Sea water was supposed to be very good for health, they said. Prabhupāda said he would try it and after taking his morning massage walked down to the seashore, wearing his gamchā and carrying a towel. The ocean shore was about a hundred yards from the hotel, and by the time Prabhupāda reached the water, all the devotees were running after him in their gamchās.

Some of the devotees were already in the ocean, and when Prabhupāda reached the water's edge, they all gathered around him. As the waves glided in and swirled around Prabhupāda's feet, Hari-śauri scooped palmfuls of water and began to bathe Prabhupāda's body—his arms, chest, and head—washing away the mustard seed oil he had applied during the massage. Soon other devotees began reverently splashing handfuls of water onto Prabhupāda's body. Standing almost up to his knees in water, the bright sunshine illuminating his golden-hued body, Prabhupāda laughed as the devotees joined in.

The devotees realized that this pastime was just like an abhiṣeka, or bathing of the Deity, and when Guru-kṛpā Swami began to sing the prayers for bathing the Deity—cintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu—the other devotees joined in, singing and taking part in the abhiṣeka by the sea. Śrīla Prabhupāda enjoyed it, sometimes putting his head forward to indicate that he wanted water poured on his head, then closing his eyes as the devotees poured the water. When Prabhupāda lost his balance for a moment, Hari-śauri grabbed him. Prabhupāda's feet had been sinking into the sand, and when he held one foot out it was muddy. As he wriggled his toes, a devotee poured water on the foot, washing it clean. Prabhupāda then bent over, put ocean water in his mouth, and spat it out. Only Guru-kṛpā Swami was quick enough to catch some of the water and drink it.

As Prabhupāda allowed the devotees to participate in bathing and gently massaging him, the devotees were carried away by ecstatic feelings. After about ten minutes, Prabhupāda came out of the water, changed his clothes, and walked back to the hotel, where two devotees escorted him to a comfortable chair, sat him down, and carried him up to his room for his afternoon rest.

In the afternoon, Sevasiva Rath came again to see Prabhupāda, accompanied this time by another Purī brāhmaṇa. They gave Prabhupāda some Jagannātha prasādam and sang the Jagannāthāṣṭakam. In silent appreciation Prabhupāda listened as the brāhmaṇas sang the famous prayers with each verse ending jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me ("O Lord of the universe, kindly be visible unto me.") When the two brāhmaṇas finished singing, Prabhupāda said, "So these European and American Vaiṣṇavas, they are hankering after jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me. Now it is through your intervention that they may be able to see Jagannātha Svāmī. They are hankering like that—jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī."

Sevasiva Rath again expressed his sympathy about the devotees' not entering Jagannātha's temple. He also told Prabhupāda more about the book he had published, a compilation of select verses from Jagannātha dāsa's translation of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam into Oriya. Sevasiva had also written some commentary, and his book was to be inaugurated at a function that evening. Prabhupāda again promised to attend and address Purī's brāhmaṇas and religionists.

That evening, Śrīla Prabhupāda was guest of honor at the outdoor paṇḍāl on the beach, and his disciples accompanied him to the stage with a rousing kīrtana. Prabhupāda took his seat. After the

kīrtana ended, one of the managers of the Jagannātha temple came forward and garlanded Śrīla Prabhupāda. Sevasiva then announced, "We thank A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who has been kind enough to grace this occasion wherein we have assembled this evening to pay our respectful homage to His Holiness Jagannātha dāsa Gosvāmī, who was a contemporary of Lord Caitanya." Suddenly, about five brāhmaṇas sitting on a platform rose and walked off the stage to join a kīrtana party in front of an altar in a nearby field. It seemed strange to the devotees that these men had to leave just when Śrīla Prabhupāda was going to speak.

"I thank you very much," Śrīla Prabhupāda began, but then the sound system failed. Śrīla Prabhupāda paused, while one of his own disciples, an electrician, corrected the problem. Śrīla Prabhupāda resumed speaking, his voice amplified above the distraction of the nearby kīrtanas.

"So in our humble way," Prabhupāda was saying, "we are trying to introduce Jagannātha Svāmī's culture. Jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me." Sevasiva had invited Prabhupāda explicitly to speak about his new book, and Prabhupāda had already mentioned privately to his disciples that these people were inviting him to serve their own purpose. But now Prabhupāda took the occasion to speak about Lord Jagannātha, rather than about the Oriyan Jagannātha dāsa. He had a special message in mind.

"You will be very much pleased to know," he continued, "that in the year 1967 I introduced Ratha-yātrā in San Francisco, and it has been going on continually for the last nine or ten years. And the government, they have fixed up a holiday for Ratha-yārā. We have the twentieth of July as a government-fixed-up holiday for Ratha-yātrā. And people take part in the Ratha-yātrā. Not only my devotees, but even outsiders. Ten to twelve thousand people attend, and we distribute prasādam to all of them. They feel very much obliged. And the newspaper writes that people in general never felt such ecstasy as they are feeling in the Ratha-yātrā festival. The police say that the crowds in the Western countries, as soon as there is a big crowd, they create disturbance. But the police were surprised that this crowd is not a window-breaking crowd.

"Next we introduced Ratha-yātrā in London. And in London, Trafalgar Square—it is the most famous square within the city—there is a big column called Nelson's Column. Our ratha was so high that The Guardian newspaper criticized this Ratha-yātrā as a rival to Nelson's Column. Next we introduced Ratha-yātrā in Philadelphia. And last year we introduced Ratha-yātrā in New York. And we also have Ratha-yātrā in Melbourne and Sydney and in Paris.

"So in the Western countries Ratha-yātrā is being introduced one after another, and Jagannātha Svāmī is attracting the attention of the Western people." Suddenly some of the men on the stage began talking loudly among themselves in Oṛiyā. Prabhupāda stopped, turned, and said, "What is that?" The talking subsided, and he continued.

"So people will come in your Jagannātha Purī now from all parts of the world. That is beneficial from various points of view. From the point of view of the tourist program, the government will benefit. When people are attracted to see Jagannātha Purī, Jagannātha Svāmī, that is good. But unfortunately you do not allow these foreigners to enter the temple. How it can be adjusted? This stumbling block should be dissolved, that you want Jagannātha Svāmī to be compact within your home and you do not expand the mercy of Jagannātha.

“He is Jagannātha.* He is not only just Purīnātha or Oriyānātha. He is Jagannātha. Kṛṣṇa declares in the Bhagavad-gītā, bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ sarva-loka-maheśvaram. That is the definition of jagannātha—sarva-loka-maheśvaram.* So why you should deny the inhabitants of sarva-loka the darśana of Jagannātha? Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never approved such things. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said prthivīte ache yata nagarādi grāma/ sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma. When the thing is being done and when they are eager to come here, why you should restrain? What is the cause? This is not very good.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to argue that foreigners who had taken to Vaiṣṇavism should be allowed to enter the temple of Lord Jagannātha. Offenses to the Vaiṣṇavas, he said, were condemned by Lord Caitanya. Therefore, Prabhupāda declared, he had come to Purī specifically to request the leaders to remove this offensive restriction and be friendly to the foreign devotees. He invited Purī's leaders to come and see the Jagannātha and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples all over the world and see how the foreigners had actually become pure Vaiṣṇavas, strictly avoiding sinful life. “No illicit sex, no meat-eating, no fish-eating, no egg-eating, no intoxication, no gambling,” said Prabhupāda.

“Why you should not receive them as Vaiṣṇava and give them proper reception? That is my request. I hope there are many learned scholars and devotees present here. They should endeavor to remove this restriction of shortsightedness, and let us combinedly work with Jagannātha to preach the bhakti cult for the benefit of the whole world.”

As Prabhupāda finished his lecture, Hari-śauri leaned forward and asked Prabhupāda if he wanted to answer questions. But Sevasiva came quickly to Prabhupāda's side and said, “No, don't put their questions.” Sevasiva picked up the small paperback volume which was supposed to have been the topic of the evening's presentation. “The Bhāgavata of Jagannātha,” said Sevasiva, and he handed it to Śrīla Prabhupāda, requesting him to now speak, as expected, about the merit of the book and its inauguration. Śrīla Prabhupāda looked indifferently at the small book in his hand. Speaking over the microphone he said, “So what shall I do? Of course, I do not know the Oriya language, but it is said that it is Bhāgavata of Jagannātha. So it is inaugurated today.” Prabhupāda placed the book down and stood up to leave. The audience applauded.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then walked off across the sands in the dark, followed by his disciples, and entered a nearby Gaudiya Math temple, where the devotees held kīrtana. They then went to another Gaudiya Math temple, Purusottama Math, and again held kīrtana.

During the chanting at Purusottama Math, Prabhupāda sat in a chair. When he was ready to leave, he began to stand, using his cane as a support, but suddenly, as he was about halfway up, he dropped down again onto the chair. Hari-śauri had to lift him to his feet by holding him under the arms. Prabhupāda said nothing, but walked slowly out of the hall and got into the car. Not everyone had noticed Prabhupāda's momentary collapse, but Hari-śauri, on returning to his room, anxiously wrote of it in a letter to a Godbrother as “yet another sign that Śrīla Prabhupāda's health is very quickly dwindling away.” Certainly none of the Purī paṇḍitas had noticed any dwindling from Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation on behalf of Lord Jagannātha, Lord of the universe.

In Bhubaneswar, just before three A.M. on the morning of January 30, Śrīla Prabhupāda began dictating the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. One of his servants in the next room heard through the wall and became so excited that he awakened the other devotees. The dividing wall between the two rooms was about six feet high, with an opening above the wall up to the thatched roof. Light from Śrīla Prabhupāda's room shone into the next room through that opening, and his voice, although faint, could be clearly heard. He was dictating a short description of each chapter of the Tenth Canto.

"The first chapter, which has sixty-nine verses," he began, "describes Mahārāja Parīkṣit's eagerness to learn about the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and it also tells us how Kāṁsa killed the six sons of Devakī because of his fear of being killed by her eighth child. The Second Chapter contains forty-two verses,..." Prabhupāda's patient description of each of the ninety chapters was the epitome of faithful rendering of paramparā knowledge—without concoction, interpretation, addition, or subtraction. Therefore, he spoke with the same full faith that the original speaker of the Bhāgavatam, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, had spoken with five thousand years ago to Mahārāja Parīkṣit.

"Simply by chanting or repeating kṛṣṇa-kathā," Prabhupāda was saying, "one is liberated from the contamination of Kali-yuga. This is the mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: to hear about Kṛṣṇa and thus be liberated from material bondage." Sitting up on their blankets, the devotees listened; they would not return to sleep. It was an important, historic moment.

The Tenth Canto begins five thousand years ago, when the entire world was oppressed by demonic rulers, and Prabhupāda was comparing the situation then to the present situation. His words were faint, but not weak. He was unhesitating, sure. "Without reference to the supreme power of the Personality of Godhead," Prabhupāda dictated, "demons assert themselves to be independent kings and presidents, and thus they create a disturbance by increasing their military power. When such disturbances are very prominent, Kṛṣṇa appears. At present also, various demonic states all over the world are increasing their military power in many ways, and the whole situation has become distressful. Therefore Kṛṣṇa has appeared by His name in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, which will certainly diminish the burden of the world. Philosophers, religionists, and people in general must take to this movement very seriously, for man-made plans and devices will not help bring peace on earth."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was like a field general in his tent, and his disciples were like his infantry men. They knew they were hearing his battle strategies even before the information was disseminated through the chain of command. They were thrilled. With faith they heard that just as Kṛṣṇa had defeated the demonic rulers, so the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would counteract the demonic culture of the present age.

Later, on the morning walk, one of the devotees mentioned to Prabhupāda that they were planning to put his name on a sign on the door, saying that on January 30 at 2:50 A.M., Śrīla Prabhupāda began the Tenth Canto. Prabhupāda was pleasantly surprised that they had heard him.

"Kṛṣṇa's flute can be heard in the Tenth Canto," said Prabhupāda, "and the chapters Twenty-nine through Thirty-four are the smiling face of Kṛṣṇa."

Another of Śrīla Prabhupāda's G.B.C. men, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, had recently replaced Rāmeśvara Swami as Prabhupāda's secretary for the month. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," Satsvarūpa asked one evening while sitting with Prabhupāda in his quarters, "when I first came here Rāmeśvara Mahārāja said that you had been speaking of how Kṛṣṇa consciousness would rise to power in the United States, and I find it hard to have that vision, since now it is just the opposite."

"It is true," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "but now it has only taken its roots. You have to water and protect it, then you will get fruit. You have to give it protection. People must hear about us by our books, and we have to talk about the books."

"So it is not that it will happen overnight?"

"No," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Gradually it will grow. The seed is there. Now protect it by introducing more and more books in every house."

Again, Prabhupāda referred to the upcoming New York court case. "At least tell them to read our books," he said. "This is our statement. Our defense is that you first of all read these books and then give your statement. Finish this, and then give your judgment. Give them all these eighty-four books!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda became excited by the thought of the judges and lawyers reading all his books. He was completely serious, and he insisted the devotees get the authorities to read the books as legal evidences. Śrīla Prabhupāda continued, "Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*, 'Surrender to Me and give up all other religion.' Now the question may arise, 'Why we shall surrender?' Then you can argue and go on for three years. The whole thing will come out: What is God? What is creation? What is your position? Why you should surrender? And so on, and so on, so on. What do you think?"

"Yes, we should introduce the books as much as possible," said Satsvarūpa. "I'll write a letter to New York and tell them to emphasize this."

"Bring all these books in the court," Prabhupāda said. "One time in Calcutta there was a big lawyer named Mr. Ghosh. So on one case he brought so many books for argument. The judges were friends, so they very mildly criticized him, 'Oh, Mr. Ghosh, you have brought the whole library?' 'Yes, my lord,' said Mr. Ghosh, 'just to teach you law.'" Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed and repeated, "Yes, my lord, just to teach you law."

Prabhupāda wanted his disciples to apply the same logic in the New York case. If the judge objected and said, "Why have you brought so many books to bother me?" the devotees should reply, "You have to hear. It may take twelve years to hear, but you have to hear. This is the law." It sounded difficult, but the devotees knew they would have to try. This was Śrīla Prabhupāda's specific instruction for handling the case.

"We have to say," said Prabhupāda, "we never tried to brainwash. We have done exactly according to *sāstra*, authority. Here is the evidence. We have not manufactured anything. So they must read all the books. I think you should take defense in that way."

"Our defense statement is already written in your books," said Hari-śauri. "Certain sections?" asked Satsvarūpa. "Or should we say that they have to read all the books?"

Prabhupāda shouted, "All! Line to line. Our defense is eighty-four volumes."

"But they'll say," said Guru-krpā Swami, " "If we read all these books, we'll become brainwashed too.'"

"That is my duty," said Prabhupāda, "—you are trying to brainwash me, and I am trying to brainwash you. This is going on. That is the tussle. It is wrestling. You are trying your strength. I am trying my strength. Otherwise, where is there fight? You have got right to not agree with me. I have got right to not agree with you. Now let us settle."

In Bhubaneswar on February 2, the appearance day of Lord Nityā nanda, Śrīla Prabhupāda held the cornerstone-laying ceremony. About a thousand people came during the day to take prasādam. Sevasiva Rath attended and spoke. Prabhupāda's disciple Svarūpa Dāmodara also spoke, as did Prabhupāda himself. Later, Prabhupāda discussed with his disciples about how to manage the Bhubaneswar center. Some of the sannyāsīs admitted to Prabhupāda that they did not see much potential there.

"Why not?" questioned Prabhupāda. "This is the capital of Orissa. People are coming here. We have to have centers in every town. Even if it is not a big center, some have to work and stay here. Even if the people are coming every night only to eat the kicharī, that is also preaching."

One of the devotees said that it was too far from town and that Orissa was too poor. A better idea might be to try to build a big temple in Jagannātha Purī. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that to build in Jagannātha Purī was all right, but that Bhubaneswar was also important. Prabhupāda's Oriyan disciple, Gaura-govinda Swami, told Prabhupāda that as soon as the annual India pilgrimage was over, all the devotees would leave, and he would be left alone with one or two brahmācārīs. He was particularly suited to translating Prabhupāda's books into Oriya, so he asked Prabhupāda to give him someone to help manage the center.

"Where is the fat one?" asked Prabhupāda. "Bring him here." And a devotee ran out to fetch Bhāgavata. At the time the devotee found him, Bhāgavata was sitting in the visitors' tent, telling the other devotees about his plan to go to New York. When he heard Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to see him, he assumed it was in connection with the cornerstone-laying ceremony, since he was in charge. But as soon as he entered Prabhupāda's room he sensed something heavy was about to happen.

Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled and asked Bhāgavata how he was.

"I'm fine, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"How would you like to stay here and manage this place?"

"Well, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I don't really think I can stay here. It's too hard."

"Couldn't you stay here and build this building?"

"I could. But it is very difficult. And I was all set to go to New York." Bhāgavata began excitedly telling Prabhupāda about a telegram from Ādi-keśava Swami in New York inviting him to come and head an important preaching department in the temple.

"New York?" said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "They have too many men in New York already. You don't have to go to New York. You should stay here."

Bhāgavata objected; he couldn't work with Gargamuni Swami, the G.B.C. man for this area of India. Prabhupāda replied that he was sending Gargamuni to Bangladesh; he wouldn't be in charge of ISKCON in Orissa any more. Prabhupāda would personally supervise Bhāgavata.

Bhāgavata dāsa's next objection was that his health was not good, and he had to sleep a lot.

"This is a very healthy place," Prabhupāda countered. "You simply go out in the field to pass stool, then wash with your loṭa, and afterwards clean the loṭa with the mud. And you can bathe with the same loṭa. In this way you will stay clean and healthy."

Bhāgavata then raised his ultimate objection. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "to tell you the truth, I'm not chanting my rounds. I think I'd better go to New York, because there is good association there, and I can become strong in my regulations."

"That's all right," Prabhupāda replied. "You are working very hard. So if sometimes you aren't chanting your rounds, that's all right. As long as you are working hard, you can do your rounds at another time."

"Well, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Bhāgavata dāsa, "according to the Gurvaṣṭakam, I can understand that whenever you please the spiritual master you please Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda smiled. "Yes."

"So if you want me to stay here, then I should stay."

"Yes, I want you to stay here—make life members, build this building, and help manage the place." Although Prabhupāda had laid a cornerstone for a temple, the center had no funds or donors in sight and no established congregation. All the devotees had was faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's train was to leave at 11 o'clock the next night, and Prabhupāda sat in his little hut talking with his disciples until it was time to go. The conversation ranged from World War II politics to the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. At one point, Śrīla Prabhupāda was saying how man cannot change the laws of nature. Man should not claim that he knows something or can do something unless he can stop the miseries of birth, death, disease, and old age. "My position means my karma," Prabhupāda explained. "If I am in the plush Bhaktivedanta Manor, I have the same

suffering as I do in this hut. If I think, "Now I am in the Manor. I am happy," that is foolishness. But that is how they think. Then why are they dying? They should stop that. Can you, my disciples, help me in old age? You may try your best, but you should admit it is beyond your power. But as soon as you go back home, back to Godhead, everything is solved."

He spoke about diets. Ghee was not good for him, but to eat only boiled food was like starving. He said he was capable of fasting. "If you give me nothing to eat for three days, I can do it." Gargamuni told Śrīla Prabhupāda of a man he knew in Calcutta who was healthy at ninety and who attributed his health and longevity to his strict diet of only fruits. Gargamuni suggested Prabhupāda try that diet, and Prabhupāda agreed.

Prabhupāda mentioned the diet of his spiritual master. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, he said, ate very little, but not only fruits. He liked to eat salty things, and his favorite preparation was made from chick pea flour and peanuts fried in ghee.

After the talk, when devotees were commenting about Prabhupāda's proposed fruit diet, Hari-śauri remarked affectionately, "He has said that before, but he will never do it."

On the overnight train ride to Calcutta, Prabhupāda could not rest because of two drunken men in the next compartment. Throughout the night they were howling and addressing each other, "Oh, Dr. Mukerjee!" "Oh, Mr. Chatterjee!" Prabhupāda remarked with disgust that these were the names of Bengali brāhmaṇa families, but that now they had become drunkards. Jagannātha Purī, he said, had been a holy place for thousands of years, but within a few years it would be so no longer. People were using Purī as a seaside resort for recreation—people like Dr. Mukerjee and Mr. Chatterjee, who had no understanding of spiritual life.

As the train pulled into Howrah Station, Prabhupāda sat for a few minutes before disembarking. The vendors' loud cries of "Chay! Chay!"* punctuated the overall din of humanity and machines.

"This modern society!" Prabhupāda sighed. "It is very painful to even see their faces—they are fallen so much. By seeing their faces you become polluted. Last night they disturbed so much. And they think they are happy, they are enjoying life."

"But we have to take the risk," said Satsvarūpa, "to go and preach?"

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "If you are engaged in preaching, you are not affected. Sometimes yogīs go to the Himalayas just to avoid seeing the face of the vicious persons. They practice yoga in a sacred and solitary place. Otherwise, what is this? Simply "Chay, chay, chay," and cigarette, bidi, talking nonsense, drinking? Yet the Vedic system is still in India. In the morning they take bath in the villages. In the cities also, at least those who come from the village. You will find in Bombay, many poor men are taking bath early in the morning. You have seen? They will wash their floor, take bath."

With fond thoughts of the pure life in the Vedic village, Śrīla Prabhupāda left the station, passing through the crowds and the noise. He knew Calcutta well, better than any of his disciples. The

poverty, chaos, and political slogans did not phase him. It was his hometown. But he had no mundane connections there. He was coming only for a few days—to preach. Then on to Māyāpur.

Māyāpur

February 7, 1977

More than eighty Bengali gurukula boys, along with some one hundred other devotees, greeted Prabhupāda with a kīrtana at the front gate of the Māyāpur Chandrodaya Mandir. The entire ISKCON land seemed to be blooming with flowers, and the freshly painted temple building shone like the first reddish rays of dawn. The new building, a long residential building, was almost completed. “Back to home, back to Godhead,” Prabhupāda said softly, as his car entered the gate and slowly proceeded toward the temple.

He was arriving three weeks before hundreds of devotees from all over the world were scheduled to come and be with him for the celebration of Gaura-pūrṇimā, the appearance day of Lord Caitanya. Bhavānanda Goswami and Jayapatāka Swami, Śrīla Prabhupāda's leaders of ISKCON Māyāpur, ushered him through the crowd of gurukula boys and devotees up to the Deity room, where he beheld and bowed before the shining, golden forms of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava.

Later, while sitting in his room on the second floor, Śrīla Prabhupāda complimented the devotees for making the grounds so beautiful and clean. Hundreds of flowers decorated his room like a gorgeous garden. “These flowers are your first success,” said Prabhupāda. He sat back, relaxed with the special pleasure and satisfaction he felt when in the atmosphere of his beloved Māyāpur. “For Kṛṣṇa's service,” he said, “you submit some plan, and He's very glad. We want some flower for Kṛṣṇa's service, and Kṛṣṇa is supplying. Everything we want for Kṛṣṇa, not for our sense gratification. For Kṛṣṇa we can endeavor multifariously—that is the contribution of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that prior to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the Vaiṣṇavas used to live retired lives in Vṛndāvana—no preaching. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was the first to demonstrate how pure devotees can preach in sophisticated ways, even living in big buildings and utilizing automobiles in the service of Kṛṣṇa.

“People may be envious that these devotees are living in palatial buildings,” said Prabhupāda, “but Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said only the devotees shall live in palatial buildings. Only devotees. Just like government servants are given the best places to live in. Similarly, those who are devotees, they should be given all facilities. Not extravagancy, not luxury, but nice food, nice place, nice facilities—and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is our mission. This is not dry. Especially you coming from America and Europe, you are not accustomed to the hardships of Indian people. You must have the bare necessities of comfort, and serve Kṛṣṇa. This I am trying to do and utilize.”

Prabhupāda thanked the devotees present for working in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he reiterated his familiar formula that American brains and American money combined with Indian culture could turn the whole world into a heaven.

Later, Śrīla Prabhupāda went to oversee the new building, the longest building in West Bengal, Jayapatāka Swami said—more than seven hundred feet. Śrīla Prabhupāda said it looked like a train. He inspected all the rooms one by one and emphasized that they must be ready in time for the festival. Walking along the veranda he remarked, “Oh, it is just like Fifth Avenue.”

The next few days were quiet. Prabhupāda would sit taking his massage in the late morning on the roof amid hundreds of potted plants. Leaning on the rail of the veranda outside his room one day, he looked down onto the lawn where one of the women was picking flowers for the Deities. “This is temple,” he said, “—always something going on. And with each flower picked, she advances in spiritual life a little more.” Prabhupāda particularly liked that the Māyāpur Chandrodaya Mandir was always being expanded and improved. He liked to look out from the veranda and see guests arriving, devotees working, and new plans manifesting.

But Prabhupāda's ill health persisted—an imbalance of pitta and vāyu (bile and air), he said. One morning when his servant asked him how he felt, he replied, “Very bad.” But sometimes after a “very bad” morning, he would feel much better.

The devotees did not think of Prabhupāda's illness in a material way, but it caused them anxiety. Over the years he had gone through various health crises, and the devotees knew these illnesses were transcendental, directly controlled by Kṛṣṇa. In 1974, when he had been very ill in Vṛndāvana, he had said that the cause was his disciples' not strictly following the rules and principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His disciples knew they had to strictly follow his orders if they actually cared for his health. He would go on taking risks—accepting more disciples, traveling and preaching—but his disciples had to avoid acting in ways that would disturb his health. Mostly the devotees preferred to think that Prabhupāda's health would soon improve. And Śrīla Prabhupāda himself did not dwell on the subject; he was too absorbed in spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

A few days after his arrival, Śrīla Prabhupāda journeyed by car and ferry to Navadvīpa to visit the āśrama of his Godbrother Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja. But while walking up the steep stone steps, Prabhupāda's legs suddenly gave way, and he collapsed. Fortunately, Hari-śauri was close enough to catch him. It was the second time Prabhupāda had collapsed in less than two weeks. Both times he had been actively preaching, and both times he had continued on his way with no mention of what had happened.

In Bhubaneswar, Śrīla Prabhupāda had promised Svarūpa Dāmodara he would go to Manipur with him after the Māyāpur festival. Manipur, an independent country north of India, was mentioned in the Vedic literature, Prabhupāda said. Arjuna's wife Citrāṅgadā had come from Manipur, and it had been ruled by Kṛṣṇa conscious kṣatriyas. Now Śrīla Prabhupāda, encouraged by Svarūpa Dāmodara, who was born and raised in Manipur, was eager to go and try to revive a Kṛṣṇa conscious state there. But with his weakening health, he questioned whether he should travel.

Hari-śauri, who had been with Prabhupāda continually for eighteen months, felt that Prabhupāda's health was not likely to improve. And in one sense, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was spreading so widely under Prabhupāda's direction that it was perhaps not so necessary for Prabhupāda to travel, at least not with the extraordinary expenditure of energy and strength that he had been displaying for the last ten years. Maybe he could retire from traveling. Even during the

previous summer, when he had been traveling in the United States, he had once remarked that he simply wanted to go there to become encouraged by how well his devotees were managing everything by themselves. He used to say that he had laid the foundation and erected the framework for the building of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement; now his followers simply had to fill it in. He would often say he had injected medicine into the system of materialistic society; now it would spread and act. He also said he had ignited the fire that would now rage around the world. Therefore, although he was always anxious for his movement, he had confidence.

One morning just after breakfast, Prabhupāda was on his veranda looking out across the land of Māyāpur. Turning to Hari-śauri, he said, "Actually it does not matter even if I die immediately. I have given the basis for everything, and now if they simply manage things nicely and follow whatever programs I have begun, then everything will be successful." Hari-śauri was disturbed to hear such statements, and he remained speechless. Then Prabhupāda added, "But still I would like to finish this Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's stay at ISKCON Māyāpur had been quiet, but as the G.B.C. men began arriving from the West, he heard the latest news of the fierce opposition to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in America. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Brahmānanda Swami, coming from New York, reported that the case in which Ādi-keśava Swami was being charged with mind control would be heard later in March and that the judge had given Ādi-keśava permission to come and see Śrīla Prabhupāda. They also told Prabhupāda that several other devotees had been kidnapped and that, in some cases, parents had secured legal conservatorship through judges to abduct the devotees.

"What is the complaint of the opposing party?" asked Prabhupāda. Again, as when he had argued with Rāmeśvara Swami, he defended the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement while his disciples fired materialistic arguments at him. It was not just an exercise; he was training his disciples. He had to answer any arguments that had discouraged or weakened them. And beyond that, he was actually the ultimate defender of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"They say we are zombies," said Brahmānanda.

"Zombies?" Prabhupāda asked. "What is that?"

"Zombies," said Hari-sauri. "Like a robot. We have no brain. We are like machines. They say we have no freedom of choice."

"Children have got also the same thing," replied Prabhupāda. "But the father stops. Children want to play; they do not like to go to school. Father does not like it. Is that father's attempt to check the child's freedom? Every father is doing that. The government is doing that. Why the government is checking criminals?"

Prabhupāda was interested to hear other news, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami reported on the new ISKCON farm in Pennsylvania and on the restaurant in New York City. Brahmānanda Swami talked about their new farm in Africa, and both he and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa gave their impression of things at Hare Krishna Land in Bombay and reported on Gopāla Kṛṣṇa's progress in printing Prabhupāda's books in various Indian languages.

"So this is the thing that is starting to happen now," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "They are lobbying in the Congress of the United States to pass laws that if someone is abnormal then the parents should have the right to commit him to psychological treatments. Even though the child may be fifty years old and the parents seventy years old, if the parents think that the child is not sane, then they have the right to have the child committed."

"This is very dangerous," said Prabhupāda.

They told Prabhupāda of a devotee who had been kidnapped while distributing books at an airport. The court had given the girl's parents legal authority to have her confined for thirty days in a special center in Arizona run by deprogrammers. They also told him that among the lobbyists advocating kidnapping were powerful groups of Christians and Jews, who had become active because they saw that other movements, not only the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, were taking young people away from the religion of their parents. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested that a probable result of ISKCON's court case in New York would be to establish ISKCON as bona fide. Defenders of civil rights in America were alarmed at the threat to constitutional liberties, and therefore the court case was generating great interest. It was a test of freedom of religion. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa told Prabhupāda it was the biggest test case of the decade, and that the American Civil Liberties Union had taken it as one of their main priorities.

"Two states have passed laws making this deprogramming legal," said Brahmānanda Swami. "And they also give tax exemption. That means the government is giving support."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "They are afraid that these Kṛṣṇa conscious men may capture the government."

"Yes," agreed Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, "some of them are saying that the Kṛṣṇa conscious organization is very powerful and that our ambition is to take over the world."

Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed. "That's a fact. Well, let us see. It is a fight between Kṛṣṇa and demon. Let us do our duty and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa; everything will be all right. There were so many demons. Prahlāda Mahārāja was five-years-old boy and his father was such a big demon. But still Prahlāda Mahārāja was victorious. Similarly, you are all like Prahlāda Mahārāja. The fight is there. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Depend on Kṛṣṇa. You will come out victorious. Nṛsiṃhadeva will come. So the 'poison' of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is acting now. That is good. If we come out victorious, that will be a great victory."

As they spoke, the electricity went off, and Prabhupāda's room, as well as the rest of the building, was in darkness. Within a few moments a devotee entered with a kerosene lantern. Prabhupāda began to reminisce, saying that electricity had been introduced in India when he was a young boy. At first not every house could afford electricity, he said, and if a man had a good gas light in his house, he was considered rich. He said the street lamps were carbon arc, and the man who changed the carbon rods would throw the used ones in the street. "When the carbon would be changed," said Prabhupāda, "they would throw, and we children would collect them."

"What would you do with them?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed and said, "Play—"We have collected something.' So electricity was introduced in our life when we were ten or twelve."

"But still you were able to read," said Brahmānanda.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "with this lantern." He recalled that his father would purchase kerosene for the lanterns. His father was not rich, but by buying and stocking things in quantity, he used to amply provide for his family. Life was simple then, Prabhupāda concluded, but civilized.

The sannyāsīs began telling Prabhupāda about how a military dictatorship had taken over in Argentina and had officially banned the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Twenty thousand dollars' worth of books had been seized, and devotees had been arrested. Many other persons were being regularly arrested or shot in the streets.

"Things are deteriorating everywhere," said Prabhupāda.

"Very quickly," added Brahmānanda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "So this will give impetus to Kṛṣṇa consciousness—yadā yadā hi dharmasya glāniḥ. [Bg. 4.7] Don't be disappointed. Kṛṣṇa will act through His movement and kill them, these demons. How it will be done, that you cannot know now, but it will be done. Let us remain true soldiers. That's all. And suppose you die in the fight? Fight means with vow, with determination either to gain victory or die. Because it is a fight against māyā. Why you shall be afraid of being killed? When there is a fight, one must know that, 'Either I'm going to be killed or gain victory.' Jīva vā mara vā. Those who are devotees, either they live or they die, it's the same thing. While they live they are serving Kṛṣṇa. When they die they will serve Kṛṣṇa. Jīva vā mara vā. Tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti. [Bg. 4.9] He goes to Kṛṣṇa. So what is the loss? We are working for Kṛṣṇa, and if we die we go to Kṛṣṇa. What is the loss?"

A few days later Ādi-keśava Swami arrived in Māyāpur to see Śrīla Prabhupāda. Ādi-keśava was only twenty-three years old, and all these things were creating a great strain upon him. Against his lawyer's advice, he had come to India in desperation, to see Śrīla Prabhupāda. For the preliminary hearings he had worn a business suit and a regular haircut, but now he appeared before Śrīla Prabhupāda with shaven head and saffron robes. Other sannyāsīs had also arrived, and they all gathered in Prabhupāda's room, eager to get his direction.

"This movement is not brainwashing," Prabhupāda began, "we are brain-giving. First of all you must have brain. Then there is a question of washing. But you have no brain. You do not know what is this life. You cannot explain what is the difference between a dead man and a living man. You have got so many big, big scientists and philosophers, but you do not know. So where is your brain? First of all prove your brain. Then there can be a question of washing. It is not brainwashing. It is brain-giving movement. Unfortunately, you have no brain. Therefore you misunderstand. On this point the Bhagavad-gītā will explain. What do you think? Brainwashing or brain-giving?"

"Yes," said Ādi-keśava, "this is good." Prabhupāda said the devotees should consult among themselves, write an essay, and send it to the court. His main point was that most people could not understand the simple truth of the soul. They are in need of knowledge, and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is giving essential knowledge of the soul. Therefore it is a brain-giving movement.

Ādi-keśava took the role of the antagonists. "Well," he said, "I have a brain, and it is functioning. Otherwise, how could I be speaking to you now? How could I even answer you?"

"But that speaking and the dog's barking are the same thing," said Prabhupāda. "The dog is barking. What is the difference? He is speaking in a different language, that's all. The dog is barking, and you are speaking. What is the difference?"

Ādi-keśava: "But they say, 'We have art. We have science.'"

"Whatever you may have," Prabhupāda replied, "you cannot answer the ultimate question."

Arguments flew back and forth, as other devotees in the room challenged Prabhupāda's logic. But Prabhupāda stuck to his main point. If a man doesn't know the difference between a dead man and a living man, if he doesn't know the soul, then he has no brain. When the devotees mentioned faith in scripture, Prabhupāda said that he was not arguing on the basis of scripture, but on logic. Whatever arguments they raised, Prabhupāda strongly defeated. There was no trace of illness or weakness in Prabhupāda's demeanor as he drilled his men on how to defend by aggressive argument.

"They say that this discussion is beyond our intelligence," said Ādikeśava.

"If you say beyond your intelligence," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "that means you have no brain."

In Prabhupāda's association, Ādi-keśava gained strength and conviction. "They complain," said Ādi-keśava, "that if one becomes a devotee, he suffers from loss of identity. But actually, they don't know who they are. So we will challenge them like that, 'What is this loss of identity? You don't even know who you are. So you have nothing to lose.'"

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, with great spirit. "What is your identification? That you do not know. We are teaching that by identifying yourself with this body, you have lost your identity."

"Most of their charges," said Ādi-keśava, "are based on misconceptions about our movement. For instance, they say that we do not eat enough or sleep enough. Yet we have studies from their own scientists that say our diet is good."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "How we are living if our diet is not good? Ten years we are eating insufficiently? Then how we are living? You do not know what is good food, but the result you have to know. A cow eats so much grass, and a human being eats a small plateful. If the cow says, 'You are not eating sufficient like me,' is that logic?"

"No," said Ādi-keśava, "it is not logic."

Prabhupāda: "So you are just like cows and asses. You eat voraciously. Does it mean I have to eat voraciously?"

"But what proof is there?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami. "They may argue for proof of the soul."

"This is proof," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Now if the real active principle has left, if you can understand it, then replace it. Replace life. If you cannot, then you have no brain." Prabhupāda argued that at death, although the parts of a body remained, something was missing.

"But you have not seen that something," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"See it or not," said Prabhupāda, "I can see. Why this man is dead? Something is missing."

"Well," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "it's just like a machine."

Śrīla Prabhupāda became fiery. "A machine you can replace! Why don't you bring a new body and replace the dead one? Therefore you have no brain! It is a completely different thing!"

Prabhupāda said this philosophy of the soul should be presented in court. "It will be very interesting," he said. "The case will prolong, and we can disclose our whole philosophy. Is it not? Think deeply, over and over, and fight. Tell them, 'What is your seeing? You cannot see beyond this wall. Does it mean there is nothing? Why depend on your seeing, rascal? You are being brainless.' I take it as a good opportunity for describing our whole philosophy. Don't take it as otherwise. Rather, prove yourself sufficient in this subject matter. This is a trial examination."

The devotees told Prabhupāda how critics were examining the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and trying to find fault with the devotees on the basis of their philosophy. They were challenged in court about Prabhupāda's statement that man had not gone to the moon.

"I personally did not go with you," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "So how shall I believe? From the practical point of view, I did not go. It is just some news, so why should I accept it? They believe some paper, that's all. So why shall we not believe the Vedic literatures? Vedic literature is so authoritative. It has been accepted by the ācāryas."

Next the devotees began talking about how the parents and deprogrammers justified their use of force. "This clouds the issue in the courtroom," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, "because everyone naturally feels very sympathetic toward the fathers and mothers."

"Why don't you quote from our śāstra," replied Śrīla Prabhupāda, "that he is not father—pitā na sa syāt. Find this verse."

Pradyumna had the book off the shelf and his finger on the verse within a few seconds. He read, gurur na sa syāt sva-jano na sa syāt, pitā na sa syāj janani na sā syāt/ daivam na tat syān na patiś ca

sa syān, na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum. "One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, husband, mother, or worshipable demigod."

"So how is he the father?" asked Prabhupāda. "What is the purport?"

Ādi-keśava Swami: "They argue sometimes that—

"You will argue your point," interrupted Prabhupāda, "but our point is there. We shall argue from our point of view. Unless the father releases the son from the cycle of birth and death, he is not father."

Śrīla Prabhupāda never let up, and finally he concluded, "If you try to advise a rascal, he will be angry. So this is the position. Still, we have to do our business. What can be done? Difficult task. Therefore, if you want to please Kṛṣṇa very quickly, struggle for preaching: ya idam paramam guhyam mad-bhakteṣv abhidhāsyati. So we have got our business, to please Kṛṣṇa. That is our mission. So despite so many inconveniences, we have to do this business. Mūḍho 'yam nābhijānāti loko mām ajam avyayam. [Bg. 7.25] They are all mūḍhas. So we have been engaged to teach them some lesson."

Later, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke privately and in more detail with Ādi-keśava Swami. "They told me that you had grown your hair," said Prabhupāda. Ādi-keśava admitted it was so but that he couldn't do it any more. He said he wanted to go to court proudly and say that he was Prabhupāda's son and proud of being a devotee. Prabhupāda said that was also his desire, that Ādi-keśava go into court in sannyāsa dress and carrying his sannyāsa-daṇḍa. He should have tilaka and a shaved head, and he should preach. Śrīla Prabhupāda told how people had advised him to wear Western dress when he had first come to America. Ādi-keśava had received recent letters from Prabhupāda, but now Prabhupāda told him face to face to bring all of the books into court and introduce them as evidence. He should boldly preach.

Ādi-keśava mentioned that an official in the Indian Embassy had said that the Indian government would give him asylum if necessary. Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased to hear this. When Ādi-keśava admitted that he was sometimes discouraged and alone in the prolonged legal struggle, Prabhupāda said he could take other men with him to help. But the main backing Ādi-keśava required was from Śrīla Prabhupāda; he wanted Prabhupāda's mercy. And Prabhupāda, like a father, gave solace and courage to his young, rather frail-looking son who was going into battle. Don't be afraid, Prabhupāda said. Repeatedly he would call Ādi-keśava to his room to give him more mercy: another logical argument, an instruction on how he should act in court. Prabhupāda's essential advice, of which Ādi-keśava was now aware and convinced, was that he should preach; Kṛṣṇa would protect him.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa replaced Satsvarūpa as Prabhupāda's secretary. Early in the morning, on Satsvarūpa's last day of duty, Śrīla Prabhupāda called him in just after dictating his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam verses and purports and told him that for breakfast he wanted cucumber, soaked mung dāl and fruits. He said he had just dictated some verses and purports dealing with transmigration, and he rewound the tape and played back the dictation: philosophical arguments of Kṛṣṇa's father, Vasudeva, trying

to convince Kamsa about the eternality of the soul. Vasudeva argued that at death the soul changes from one body to another, just as a man walking down the street places one foot in front of the other. And Prabhupāda, while listening, demonstrated by “walking” with two fingers across the dictating machine.

Prabhupāda's dictation continued:

At the present moment there is great opposition to the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, which is being called a “brainwashing” movement. But actually the so-called scientists, philosophers, and other leaders in the Western countries have no brains at all. The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is trying to elevate such foolish persons by enlightening their intelligence so that they will take advantage of the human body. Unfortunately, because of gross ignorance they regard the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement as a brainwashing movement. They do not know that without God consciousness one is forced to continue transmigrating from one body to another.

Now the very same arguments that Prabhupāda had spoken to the sannyāsīs were immortalized in the Bhaktivedanta purports. In the future, after the court case had been finished and mostly forgotten, Prabhupāda's true assessment of the situation would prevail.

On February 22, three hundred fifty devotees arrived on a Boeing 747 Air-India jet at Dum Dum Airport in Calcutta. The special flight, all devotees, had flown from Los Angeles to New York to London, picking up more devotees at each stop. As it was the first landing of a 747 in Calcutta, the mayor, local militia, leading Air-India dignitaries, and media people were on hand to greet the historic flight. One of the devotees told a reporter that the Boeing 747's coming from the West to Calcutta was the mercy of Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda. Ten busloads of devotees then rode to Māyāpur.

Soon the Māyāpur Chandrodaya Mandir was teeming with transcendental activity; the Gaurapūrṇimā festival was in full swing. The Vaikunṭha Players of New York staged an evening theater performance of the Rāmāyaṇa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda attended. The audience watched and appreciated Śrīla Prabhupāda almost as much as they did the play.

On the opening night of the paṇḍāl, a government minister attended to officially inaugurate the festivities. He cut a ribbon to open the new building, and he and Śrīla Prabhupāda walked together down the long first-floor corridor and viewed a photo display of ISKCON centers around the world. Halfway down the corridor Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped, shook his head, and said, “It is all inconceivable.” The minister was also amazed at the scale on which Śrīla Prabhupāda was propagating Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda and his guest went onto the stage. The minister gave an introductory speech, glorifying a well-known impersonalist svāmī, referring to him as a divine incarnation. He also slighted the name of Lord Caitanya by saying that although he didn't know whether Caitanya Mahāprabhu was an incarnation, he knew He had certainly done good in the world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke next, using scriptural evidence to correct the erroneous opinions the minister had given in his talk. Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke in Bengali, and most of his disciples could not understand, but they could appreciate the gist. Later, when Śrīla Prabhupāda was sitting in his

room with a few devotees, he began laughing. Smacking his fist into his left palm, he said, "I have smashed him."

With Gaura-pūrṇimā only about a week away, thousands of Bengali pilgrims were attending the ISKCON center each night. They streamed into the temple room for kīrtana and darśana of Rādhā-Mādhava and then went to see the ISKCON photo exhibit. It was the biggest and best organized Māyāpur festival ever. Despite the opposition in America, Lord Caitanya's movement was flooding the world with the waves of saṅkīrtana, and this gathering of more than five hundred devotees from every continent was a powerful testimony to the good health of the growing Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Rāmeśvara Swami returned with the latest figures of Prabhupāda's book production. In the English language alone Śrīla Prabhupāda had published 43,450,500 pieces of literature. And the total production of Prabhupāda's books in twenty-three languages, including Russian, was 55,314,000, more than ninety percent of which had already been distributed. Rāmeśvara also presented Śrīla Prabhupāda with a new book just off the press, the Ninth Canto, Part One, of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Rādhāvallabha reported that the next printing of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is would be so large that the paper required to print it would have to be carried on seventy-six train cars. Prabhupāda and the devotees laughed at the astounding figures.

Prabhupāda thanked the devotees for their hard work. "This is the blessing of my Guru Mahārāja," he said. "He wanted it. And because we are trying to do this, he is giving us all blessings."

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to be very active: encouraging devotees, writing, preaching. Soon after the busloads of devotees arrived, however, he became very ill again. His busy schedule became a strain, but he continued.

The G.B.C. men began their annual three days of meetings, and each evening they would meet with Prabhupāda. He heard their proposals and, after making some corrections, approved them. The final item on the G.B.C.'s list of resolutions was that all ISKCON temples hold twenty-four-hour kīrtana, in view of Prabhupāda's sickness. The devotees had also done this in 1974 when Prabhupāda had been ill. "Yes," Prabhupāda said when he heard the resolution, "chanting is the only cure for all diseases."

On Gaura-pūrṇimā, Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted more than two hundred disciples for first initiation, and he awarded second initiation to one hundred disciples. Huge crowds poured through the front gate all day; and from four P.M. until late at night, the roads would be packed and the kīrtanas would attract large receptive audiences.

In the afternoon Śrīla Prabhupāda received Tarun Kanti Ghosh, the home minister for Bengal, also in charge of the state police force. Prabhupāda spoke with Mr. Ghosh in his room and found him very favorable toward ISKCON and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had decided to stay on in Māyāpur instead of accompanying the devotees to Vṛndāvana for the second half of the festival, so some of the leaders came to his room to pay their respects before departing. When Harikeśa Swami and Ādi-keśava Swami entered together,

Prabhupāda told Harikeśa that because the people in the Communist countries were suffering so much, he should give them books without making them pay. Turning to Ādi-keśava, he said he had placed much responsibility on Ādi-keśava's thin shoulders but that he should be victorious. "So you are Harikeśa and Ādi-keśava," he said, "the Keśa brothers. So go and preach. Be successful." Śrīla Prabhupāda similarly spoke lovingly with other G.B.C. men as they departed for their assigned areas around the world.

Within a few days, Māyāpur was again quiet, with very few visiting devotees remaining.

Almost two weeks later, while Śrīla Prabhupāda was still in Māyāpur, the news of the New York court decision appeared on the front page of *The Times of India*. On receiving it, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami immediately brought a copy to Prabhupāda in his room and, at Prabhupāda's request, read it out loud.

HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT IS BONA FIDE RELIGION

Washington, March 18

The Hare Krishna movement was called a "bona fide religion" yesterday by the New York High Court Justice who threw out two charges against the officials of the movement of "illegal imprisonment" and "attempted extortion." The charge had been preferred by an angry parent that his son, as well as another disciple, had been held by the movement illegally and that they had been brainwashed. "The entire and basic issue before the court," said the Justice in dismissing the charges, "is whether the two alleged victims in this case and the defendants will be allowed to practice the religion of their choice and this must be answered with a resounding affirmative." Said Mr. Justice John Leahy, "the Hare Krishna movement is a bona fide religion with roots in India that go back thousands of years. It behooved Merrill Kreshower and Edward Shapiro to follow the tenets of that faith and their inalienable right to do so will not be trampled upon. The separation of church and state must be maintained. We must remain a nation of laws, not of man. The presentment and indictment by the Grand Jury was in direct and blatant violation of the defendant's constitutional rights." The Justice said that it appeared to the court, "The people rest their case on an erroneous minor premise to arrive at a fallacious conclusion. The record is devoid of one specific allegation of a misrepresentation or any act of deception on the part of any defendant." The Justice said, "The freedom of religion is not to be abridged because it is unconventional in beliefs and practices or because it is approved or disapproved by the mainstream of society or more conventional religions. Without this proliferation and freedom to follow the dictates of one's own conscience in this search of approach to God, the freedom of religion will be a meaningless right as provided for in the constitution. In the attempt, be it direct, well intentioned or not, presents a clear and present danger to this most fundamental basis and eternally needed right of our citizens—freedom of religion." The Hare Krishna movement has been under pressure from various groups and this judgment is expected to stop some of the harassment in which it has been subjected in recent months.

"My mission is now successful," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "In 1965 I went there. This is now recognized after twelve years. I was loitering in the street alone, carrying the books. Nobody cared."

Svarūpa Dāmodara was present, and he spoke with Prabhupāda about the Bhaktivedanta Institute and about preaching in Manipur. And other matters came before Prabhupāda's attention. But he kept coming back to the news from New York. "Our most auspicious sign is this," said Prabhupāda, "—"Hare Krishna Movement Is Bona Fide Religion.' "

Śrīla Prabhupāda's plans were to move to Bombay. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami said a lot of senior devotees were gathering in Bombay. They had gone there from Vṛndāvana and were waiting for Prabhupāda. "I am, therefore, going," said Prabhupāda, "in spite of my so much inconveniences. I am going there."

"You want to stay in Bombay?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "How long?"

"I don't want to stay anywhere," said Prabhupāda. "I want to work. Staying—I have stayed in big, big palaces, big, big cities. I have no other desire but to work."

"How long do you want to work in Bombay?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"So long as there is work," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "There is no end of it. Our Bombay should be organized. Work is our life. There is no question of how long. As long as possible. Kṛṣṇa is giving us good opportunities. Now we should take it seriously. It is not a joke—"Hare Krishna Movement Is Bona Fide Religion.' "

The devotees discussed before Prabhupāda the significance of the court decision. They also appreciated the judge and said that he was a senior man in the courts and was considered conservative. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he should be sent a letter of congratulations: "May God bless you for such right judgment. Live long life to serve God."

"Honest and sincere people normally appreciate our movement," said Svarūpa Dāmodara. "Only those who are envious—

"Envious we don't care about," Prabhupāda interjected. "We don't care, never care about. I didn't care—many times, even my Godbrothers. Neither do I care just now. I'll go on with my work. Why care? We are doing our duty, that's all—under the higher authoritative order. Have no fear. It is not personal gratification. So arrange for Manipur. We shall go."

Svarūpa Dāmodara said he would go to Delhi and try to arrange permits for entry, but that it would be hard, since most foreigners were not allowed to enter Manipur. He said that after doing his business, he would come to Bombay and see Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Now work very strenuously," said Prabhupāda. "You are all young men. And somehow or other, to a dead horse you have given life. The last fortnight I was thinking I was dead. I was thinking like that—now life is finished. I can be finished at any time—that is not amazing. To live, that is amazing. My life is finished—that is not amazing. No one will lament. "Oh, he was old man, eighty-two years old.' But if I can live for some days more, that is wonderful. If I die that is not wonderful."

"Kṛṣṇa is wonderful," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami.

"Kṛṣṇa is wonderful always," said Prabhupāda.

"And you are wonderful," said Bhavānanda Goswami.

"I am wonderful," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "as long as I serve Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, useless, no value. If I can serve Kṛṣṇa, then I am wonderful, certainly."

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued declaring that Kṛṣṇa was the most wonderful and could do anything. That he was alive and still active, he said, attested to Kṛṣṇa's being wonderful. "If Kṛṣṇa is not wonderful," he said, "is it possible for me to do all these things? Who am I? We don't want to become cheaply wonderful. We want to become really wonderful, by serving Kṛṣṇa. That is our mission. Kṛṣṇa is wonderful undoubtedly. Who can become more wonderful than Kṛṣṇa? *Mataḥ parataram nānyat*. Always remember, Kṛṣṇa is wonderful. Don't take Kṛṣṇa very slightly, like one of you. That is foolishness. Kṛṣṇa is wonderful always. He is the most wonderful person, and He can do anything wonderful."

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to make appreciative remarks about the judge's decision. He said he had feared the case might have taken fourteen years, and yet it had not even taken fourteen hours. Kṛṣṇa was so wonderful.

* * *

March 22

The senior devotees in Māyāpur felt Śrīla Prabhupāda was too ill to travel and that he should remain there and recuperate. Besides, reports from Bombay were conflicting. Surabhi Swami, knowing that Prabhupāda's quarters weren't finished, wanted more time, so he wired Prabhupāda, requesting him not to come. But Girirāja and others had been arranging a lecture program for Śrīla Prabhupāda at a paṇḍāl in Azad Maidan in Bombay, and Girirāja had written inviting Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda considered the opportunities for preaching and decided to go. He had his secretary send a telegram from Māyāpur to Bombay.

PRABHUPĀDA ARRIVING TUESDAY AT 1350 HAVE ROOMS READY IN WHATEVER CONDITION.

But on Prabhupāda's arrival in Bombay, he was so weak that he could not walk down the steep stairs from the airplane, and airline personnel arranged for him to be lowered to the ground by hydraulic lift. Once he was on the ground, several devotees assisted him in walking. Although he appeared frail, he smiled brightly when he saw the devotees waiting for him at the airport.

In the car Śrīla Prabhupāda inquired about the Bombay temple, and Hari-śauri informed him that his quarters were not yet ready, with no toilet, no running water, no doors or windows, and the workmen polishing the floors. Prabhupāda dismissed these objections and said he would move in

anyway. The devotees who knew the state of the building became extremely anxious. It didn't seem possible that anyone could live there. But Prabhupāda said he would.

Hari-śauri said he was surprised Prabhupāda had decided to travel, and Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, even up to last night, there was no chance of my coming. But still, somehow or other, we are here." Prabhupāda was traveling and preaching because that was his life. For more than thirty years he had been spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement—first in India and then in America and throughout the world. As long as Kṛṣṇa gave him even a little strength, he would continue. He wanted to hold the public lectures in the city, and he wanted to observe the progress of the construction at Hare Krishna Land, his grandest temple. Even though the temple was not completed, he would move in and show the devotees how to use it.

As they drove up to the entrance to Hare Krishna Land, Prabhupāda could see the tall towers of the ISKCON hotel and the incomplete but massive domes of the temple. These huge structures dwarfed the little shed that was the temporary residence of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsavihārī. The Deities had been in that shed since 1971, when Prabhupāda had moved Them there, with a promise that he would build Them a beautiful temple. And now, after much difficulty and struggle, that promise was soon to be fulfilled. Rādhā-Rāsavihārī would soon move into one of the most gorgeous and opulent temples in India.

Hare Krishna Land was intense with activity as some two hundred workers plied their various skills in constructing the temple-hotel complex, under the direction of Surabhi Swami and his assistants. A dozen men were cutting redstone slabs to cover the concrete superstructure of the hotel; almost fifty marble workers were chipping away with hammers, making decorative columns and arches in the temple; and masons and interior finishers were working on the theater building. Much of the work was completed, yet everything still appeared bare, like bones without flesh. The hotel had no windows or doors and, of course, no furniture or curtains, and the temple was mostly an unfinished structure.

The work crews were moving quickly, concentrating especially on Śrīla Prabhupāda's quarters on the top floor of one of the hotel towers. But even that was not ready, so Citrakāra, as ordered by Surabhi Swami and Girirāja, drove Prabhupāda's car past the hotel to the rear of the property, to where Prabhupāda usually stayed, in an apartment in one of the old tenement buildings.

Devotees were waiting at Śrīla Prabhupāda's tenement room in happy anticipation. They were prepared with paraphernalia to perform a foot-bathing ceremony and āratī, and they had spent most of the day cleaning the rooms, which were decorated with lily garlands and scented with incense. A group of devotees stood outside the building with mṛdaṅgas and karatālas holding kīrtana, and some of the brahmacāriṇīs were poised, ready to throw flower petals before Śrīla Prabhupāda when he walked from his car and up the stairs. But Śrīla Prabhupāda was in a different mood. "I will never again go into this apartment," he said. "Take me to my new quarters." Citrakāra repeated what Śrīla Prabhupāda had already heard: "Your quarters aren't ready yet, Śrīla Prabhupāda. It will take a few more days to finish."

"Call Surabhi Mahārāja," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was adamant. The devotees in the apartment and in front of the tenement wondered why Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn't getting out of his car. As Citrakāra was driving Prabhupāda back to the hotel, Surabhi came running up behind.

"Why are my quarters not ready?" Prabhupāda asked from the car window. Running to catch up, Surabhi explained that he needed a few more days and that Śrīla Prabhupāda could please stay at his old apartment in the meantime.

"You do what I say!" shouted Prabhupāda. The car stopped. "If I don't go there now," Prabhupāda said, still speaking loudly, "it will never be finished. I want to go now!"

"Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda." And Surabhi ran off to see if he could get the elevator to work. Meanwhile, the assembled devotees, having heard the news, also ran to be with Prabhupāda as he entered his new quarters.

Śrīla Prabhupāda felt his time was limited, and if he was not insistent, his disciples would delay more and more. He had already been delayed for years by the landowner and the government. Even after he had purchased the land, the police commissioner had remarked that the kīrtana was "a nuisance" and had delayed construction for months by denying the No Objection Certificate. But despite so many delays, Prabhupāda had persisted and won. No, he wouldn't go back to the old place. Now the new Bombay temple should come to life—now that he had come.

The elevator didn't work. The devotees, therefore, carried Prabhupāda in a palanquin up the stairs to his fifth-floor apartment. The place was cluttered, and the floor was covered with a thick, greasy marble polish the workers were using. The dozen workers present were confused—why was their work being interrupted? The devotees rushed in with drums, karatālas, and āratī paraphernalia, but just stood around, not knowing what to do. The room was bare, with no furniture, desk, or sitting place.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, looked around at the chaotic scene and said, "I am going to sit down here." A devotee took off a woolen cādar and placed it on the floor in an isolated dry part of the room, and Śrīla Prabhupāda sat down. "Now you can do what you like," he said.

While some of the devotees began washing the floor, others ran to find serviceable pieces of furniture to provide Śrīla Prabhupāda with a desk, seat, and bed. Surabhi Swami nervously bathed Prabhupāda's feet and then offered āratī, while devotees sang śrī-guru-caraṇa-padma and tried not to slip on the greasy floor. Surveying the scene with a satisfied look, Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled broadly and said, "Thank you very much."

When the welcoming function was complete, Śrīla Prabhupāda was left alone with his secretaries. He said his quarters were to his liking. He spent the night there, but the next day agreed to move for a week to the home of Mr. Kartikeya Mahadevia. For a week he would attend the Bombay paṇḍāl program, which was near Mr. Mahādevia's home, and this would give Surabhi Swami enough time to get the quarters ready.

Śrīla Prabhupāda could not stand and walk without assistance. From Mr. Mahādevia's house the devotees would carry him on a palanquin to the car, from the car they would carry him to the room behind the paṇḍāl lecture platform, and from there onto the stage, where Bhavānanda Goswami would help him onto the vyāsāsana.

Compared to former paṇḍāl festivals, where sometimes thirty thousand people had gathered in one evening, this one was small, with only about a thousand attending nightly. The main reason for such a small turnout was that India had just held an election, and the people were absorbed in politics. On March 22, after the Congress party had been defeated in the House of Parliament, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had resigned. Within a day or two, a new prime minister would be selected from the Janata party. Many Bombayites who might otherwise have attended the paṇḍāl lecture were caught up in hearing the news, attending rallies, or talking about national politics and the fall of Indira Gandhi. But the small crowd that attended was very interested. Prabhupāda was not disappointed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke, and his faint voice was amplified over the sound system. "Bhavānanda Swami will recite two or three verses from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam," he said, "which is the theme of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The first verse begins with taravaḥ kiṁ na jīvanti."

"Do the trees not live?" Bhavānanda recited loudly. "Do the bellows of the blacksmith not breathe? All around us do the beasts not eat and discharge semen?" He read Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport and then read the next verse: "Men who are like dogs, hogs, camels, and asses praise those men who never listen to the transcendental pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the deliverer from evils." After Bhavānanda finished reading the long purport to that verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda began his lecture. He explained how the spirit soul changes bodies, life after life, but admitted that people are generally unaware of this simple fact. "But at least in India," he said, "this condition should now be changed." Not everyone would be able to realize this spiritual knowledge, but at least there should be an ideal institution. And that, he said, was the purpose of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, to create ideal brāhmaṇas who could guide and instruct the rest of the society.

"Not from so-called politicians," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "This is Indian civilization. Formerly even Lord Rāmacandra, who was the king—He is God Himself—still He used to consult the learned brāhmaṇas, sages, and saintly persons for governmental duties. The divisions of society must be there. There are so many things to be done in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Don't take that it is simply chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting is the prime factor, because if you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, then gradually everything will be clear in your mind."

Prabhupāda told how he had overcome opposition in America and how the people there were taking Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously. When he stated his plan for a combination of American money and Indian culture, the people applauded. "The real thing is knowledge," Śrīla Prabhupāda concluded. "So don't keep this knowledge locked up in your books, but spread it. My only request is that the leaders of India should now come forward and join this movement and take this advantage of doing good to the whole world. Thank you very much." The audience's applause swelled into a sustained ovation.

Prabhupāda's voice had been weak, his body almost motionless, but he had projected a power that had overcome those bodily limitations. His presence was, in fact, more commanding than ever. His energy was obviously the pure energy of the soul, transcendental to the bodily condition. Girirāja Swami called for questions, inviting people to come up and speak into a microphone in front of the stage.

Woman: "Isn't spiritual life very taxing?"

Prabhupāda: "Do you think that you are not being taxed? Why should you not be taxed for the proper gain? You are being taxed for so many nonsense things. Why not be taxed for the proper thing? That is intelligence."

As Prabhupāda answered the questions, he became more and more forceful, although he remained very still, not even moving his hand. His answers were not as lengthy as usual—he seemed to be saving his energy—but he delivered each answer with intense emphasis and conviction.

A well-dressed, middle-aged Indian man stepped forward and asked, "Swamiji, what is the importance of health in life, and how do you advise people to maintain health? And how does it connect to your mission?"

Prabhupāda: "What is health? First of all you have to understand that however healthy you may be, you must die. So what problem will you have solved? Janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi duḥkha-doṣānudarśanam, Kṛṣṇa says. It is not my manufacturing. Although you may try to remain very healthy, nature's law is that you must die. How can you help yourself? After all, you have to meet death. So long as you have got this material body, there is no question of health. You must suffer. You may be a very great scientist, but nature's law must act. Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni. Foolish persons bewildered by false egotism think, "I am improving my health, I am improving this... ' He is improving nothing. He's completely under the clutches of material nature. He can't act anything independently. That is the law of nature."

Another man asked if Prabhupāda could solve political problems "with this religious basis."

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "All problems will be solved when we become Kṛṣṇa conscious."

"What is the simple solution to understand the soul?" another man asked. "I would like to understand the soul."

"This is very simple," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "but you are educated so foolishly that you cannot understand." Śrīla Prabhupāda explained briefly that the body is made of material elements but that there is a superior element. "Anyone can understand," he said. "Everything is explained in the Bhagavad-gītā. But people are not serious to understand."

The morning after the first paṇḍāl lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat with Kartikeya Mahadevia, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, and Bhavānanda Go swami. Ever since Prabhupāda's extreme weakness of health had occurred in Māyāpur, he would often sit for hours alone and silent. When he spoke, his voice

was often hoarse or faint, but otherwise his conversation was as it had always been: completely Kṛṣṇa conscious.

In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda was becoming increasingly strong in his uncompromising criticism of all mūḍhas who do not accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was condemning materialistic civilization, calling it a dog civilization or an anthill civilization. A dog runs on four legs, and a human being runs on four wheels; but if he doesn't know the meaning of life, then he is no better than the dog. Both humans and ants build tall edifices, but if a man doesn't know of the soul and of Kṛṣṇa, then despite his proud skyscrapers, his civilization is no more than a glorified anthill.

"If more visitors come," Prabhupāda said, "I shall describe all this anthill civilization. Health—nonsense. What health? He'll be kicked out immediately." Śrīla Prabhupāda was referring to the man's question from the paṇḍāl. "Who is healthy if he is going to die?" Prabhupāda asked. "'I am so healthy that I am going to die tomorrow.' This is their health."

"Almost every one of those questions," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, "was about the body."

Prabhupāda: "Kṛṣṇa says, na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre. That is healthy. When you do not die although the body is destroyed, that is healthy life. What is this healthy life? The body is finished—and everything. Actually, everything is not finished, but people are kept in that ignorance. They think the body is finished and then everything is finished, but that is not the fact. Kṛṣṇa very clearly said, na jāyate mriyate vā kadacin. [Bg. 2.20] If you do not question, then how is it possible? But that is the most important question."

Prabhupāda mentioned that despite the United Nations World Health Organization, still everyone was going to die. "Where is health?" he asked. "Such foolish things are going on all over the world. So organize. Introduce reality to them and spread it, slow but sure."

"So we shouldn't be impatient and compromise," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, "just to be popular."

"There's no question of becoming impatient," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "You have got a diamond. If there is no buyer of the diamond, that does not mean you have to throw it away. You must know that 'Here is a diamond. If I want it, I must pay the proper price.' That I want to establish. Why India's culture should be lost in this way? I am not a cheap patriot. I want to give Indian culture to the whole world. I am not going to cheat people, taking Bhagavad-gītā and speaking all nonsense. I want to present Bhagavad-gītā as it is. That is my mission. Why should I cheat you?"

"We will try to follow your message properly," said Mr. Mahadevia.

"Why should India's big culture be lost for the matter of these rascal leaders?" said Prabhupāda. "They should be stopped. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is all-inclusive. Just like the economic question: annād bhavanti bhūtāni. Kṛṣṇa says grow food. It is practical. But when I was travelling, I saw millions of clerks coming to get education. And who is growing the food? Then these clerks have to be provided in these pigeonholes and depend on ration. Is that civilization? Throngs of people are coming. They are coming like ants. And when you go to the village, it is all vacant. No one is

interested to produce food. Everyone is interested to live in the city in these pigeonholes and go to the cinema, the brothel, go to the club, learn how to drink, how to become "gentlemen." Is that civilization? The human aim of life is lost. You do not know why you are going to the office, why you are eating. They are keeping humanity in an animal mentality, a doggish mentality. University education is a doggish mentality. The dog wags his tail as soon as you give him some food."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Mahadevia. "For application for a job, there are five jobs, and five dozen people apply."

"Is that education?" said Prabhupāda. "Better not to be educated. Those who are not educated, they can purchase five rupees' worth of potatoes and sit down anywhere. After spending so much money, living at the cost of fathers and mothers, they have no job and no food. Then they plan some political party—Naxalite or this or that party—and join a political movement and help Indira Gandhi. You are paid to make propaganda."

"But all that has vanished now," said Mr. Mahadevia. "That plan has failed completely." Like many other Indians, Mr. Mahadevia was hopeful that with a new election, conditions would be improving.

"No," said Prabhupāda, "another one will come. This unemployment is there. When I was a child, we were purchasing mustard oil for three annas, and now it is selling for thirteen rupees per kilo. Will a change of government bring this thirteen rupees to three annas? Then what is the benefit? Stool is stool, whether you take it from the top side or the bottom side."

A few devotees entered the room and sat, while Prabhupāda encouraged them all in preaching. He said that people could not get relief through government but through Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa and His devotees were for everyone, not for a particular nation or person.

"The people are in darkness," said Prabhupāda. "And the politicians are keeping them like dogs, hogs, and camels, taking a vote from them and becoming a leader. Nobody protested last night, however, that I called all men dogs, hogs, and camels. No one came forward and said, 'You are using very strong words.' Because it is all a fact."

"They especially liked your idea," said Hṛdayānanda Goswami, "of American money and Indian culture. They applauded for that."

"Yes, that is my mission," said Prabhupāda. "I am doing that. I am bringing money from America. Nobody is paying me. It is not a joke. Ten lakhs of rupees. Who else brings?"

"Even big export companies don't bring so much," said Gopāla Kṛṣṇa.

"And they will be glad," said Prabhupāda. "They have got money, and they are getting culture. I am trying for united nations. That is the real attempt, not this United Nations, all rogues and thieves and cheaters, barking dogs. I am trying for real United Nations. Let us cooperate together."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples rallied to hear him speak like this, and they resolved to somehow counteract the forces of ignorance through Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He said they should proceed slowly but surely, just as he had done. He had begun humbly, "loitering" on the streets of New York, and before that he had been living alone in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. But now there was the Bombay temple, a palace that would be crowded with thousands of guests to see the Deity and attend cultural programs.

"Do it enthusiastically," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "You are all young men."

"Our enthusiasm is coming from you, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"I am old man," said Prabhupāda faintly. But the devotees didn't accept that; Śrīla Prabhupāda was nava-yauvana, spiritually ever fresh.

Each night Śrīla Prabhupāda had a different devotee read a verse and purport. Leading disciples like Hṛdayānanda Goswami and Girirāja would lecture, and Prabhupāda would speak afterward. He continued stressing India's real message to the world and the misfortune that occurs when people, especially the Indians, neglect it. Based on his bold statements, some devotees had made a big sign and posted it outside the paṇḍāl: "The Modern Civilization Is A Failure. The Only Solution Is Kṛṣṇa Consciousness."

In his evening lectures Śrīla Prabhupāda advised his hearers against identifying with any political party. One day someone is a prime minister, he said, and the next day that person is finished. Although Prabhupāda had begun his lecture series by apologizing to the audience, saying he could not speak much because of his poor health, each night he very strongly argued that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the only solution. And during the question and answer period that followed his lecture, he was often explosive.

"When chanting," a man asked through the microphone at the front of the stage, "you chant the name of Rāma as well as Kṛṣṇa. But I do not see any photograph of Rāma here. What is the reason?"

"You do not see, but can you hear?" Prabhupāda asked.

"I do not see!" the man insisted.

Śrīla Prabhupāda exploded, "But you do not hear!" And he went on to explain that hearing is the best way of understanding that which you cannot see.

Another man asked how a religious-minded person could move in the material world. Prabhupāda replied, "Therefore you have to understand your spiritual identification. But because you are fools and rascals you are thinking, 'I am this body.'" He said that to realize this knowledge one must be trained by a spiritual master.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was aware that most of the questioners had no serious intentions of following him, so sometimes he reprimanded them, like an older brother, for their foolishness. Even their asking philosophical questions with no intention of following was itself foolishness. But Śrīla

Prabhupāda continued to offer the diamond of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, even when the inquirer didn't possess the purchase price of sincerity. He offered it nonetheless, and at great expense to his own physical condition.

When a man rhetorically asked Prabhupāda to kindly enlighten him about the soul, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "That is already explained, that you are a soul within the body." Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborated on how the senses are superior to dull matter, the mind is higher than the senses, intelligence is higher than the mind, and the soul is highest of all. "So it requires study," he said. "It requires education. The education is there, the books are there, the teachers are there. Unfortunately, you are not interested to take this spiritual education. You are now interested in technology—how to hammer. That's all."

Each evening a prominent guest would appear at the paṇḍāl and introduce the program. One night, after J. M. Gandhi, a justice of the high court of Bombay, spoke, Bhavānanda Goswami read aloud the first two verses, along with Śrīla Prabhupāda's commentary, from the teachings of Lord Rṣabhadeva in the Fifth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke briefly and agreed to take questions.

"If God is everywhere," a man asked, "why His presence is not felt by everybody?"

"Everybody is not intelligent," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Mostly they are rascals. *Manuṣyānāṁ sahasreṣu*. This is the statement by God that, 'Out of millions of persons, one tries to become perfect. And out of many millions of perfect persons, one can understand God.' So God understanding is not so easy. But if we want to understand, God will help us. That is the point."

The next man said he had several questions. "My first question is, I don't think God is opposed to sex. Seriously. I have heard many a lecture, and it is always stressed as if the God is opposed to sex. But I don't think that's so."

"God is never opposed to sex," replied Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Who said? God said, *dharmāviruddho kāmō 'smi*: 'Sex which is not against the regulative principles of religious life, that I am.' God never says, 'Stop sex.' Otherwise, why is there *grhastha āśrama*? *Āśrama* means that there is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But make it *āśrama*, and follow the rules and regulations of *āśrama*. Then it is all right. Otherwise, you are bound up by the laws of nature."

The same man then referred to Prabhupāda's purport which Bhavānanda Goswami had read, in which Prabhupāda had criticized the life of the hoglike man who lives only for sense gratification. "One of your principal statements," the man said, "was that a man goes on the motor tram, stands there for two hours, reaches his place of business and works there from nine o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the evening, returns back, has his food and sex and all that. I found many people who have worked very hard, raised children very nicely, have sex, but lead a good life. I don't think there is anything wrong with that."

"Yes, if there is no wrong," said Prabhupāda, "it is all right. But this sort of life is not very palatable."

The man continued, "Because I find even the dog—

Śrīla Prabhupāda interrupted, but his reply was soft and humble. "If you like that life, if you feel it is good, then that is up to you. But I don't think this is a very nice way of life, to work so hard simply for bread."

"No," the man said, "I agree there."

Śrīla Prabhupāda then raised his voice more strongly. "Then agreed, agreed. Then why disagree? That's all right, no more." The man had more questions, but Tamāla Kṛṣṇa called on someone else.

"Would you agree that God is just a concept? If you do not, please give a logical reason for that."

Prabhupāda: "Why shall I agree that God is only a concept?"

"Because I want it logically."

"You do not know logic. You have to learn logic."

"But I still would like you to explain it logically."

"Yes, but you have to learn how to know it. There is master. Just like you cannot prove logically that without father, there is a child." Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that everything we see is growing out of the earth, and the earth is described in the Vedas as the mother. But there cannot be a child without a father; where there is mother and child, there must be father. God, therefore, is the father of everything.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples were urging him not to exert himself, so when Svarūpa Dāmodara arrived, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked him to give the evening lecture. Prabhupāda was very impressed with Svarūpa Dāmodara's scientific presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One of the devotees remarked that Svarūpa Dāmodara's talk seemed too technical for the audience, but another devotee replied that even if no one else had appreciated the speech, Śrīla Prabhupāda had, and so it was a success. Following Svarūpa Dāmodara's lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke for about five minutes and left, without taking any questions.

The following night Prabhupāda did not speak at all, but he sat onstage while two of India's leading cardiologists, Dr. Kesharrao Datey and Dr. Sharma, spoke. Śrīla Prabhupāda had been garlanded by Dr. Datey, and he sat patiently and silently on the vyāsāsana, satisfied that prominent Bombayites were honoring the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Dr. Datey spoke about heart disease and said it could be eliminated by controlling anxiety. He then praised Śrīla Prabhupāda and his movement. After the doctors' brief talks, Svarūpa Dāmodara gave another scientific lecture and showed slides. Śrīla Prabhupāda later told Svarūpa Dāmodara and others, "This scientific program is giving me extra strength to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

"It seems like you are giving more stress to science in recent years than previously," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami.

"That is required for convincing the modernized man," said Prabhupāda. "Perhaps I am the first man who protested against these unauthorized scientists."

"Oh, yes," said Svarūpa Dāmodara. "Everybody is afraid of them except Śrīla Prabhupāda. Frankly speaking, I never knew that the problem was this serious before I met Śrīla Prabhupāda. I never thought about this."

"Therefore I took it so seriously," said Prabhupāda. "Every morning walk I would look for you and ask, 'Where is the scientist?' I thought, 'Here I have got an opportunity to impress a scientist, and that will fructify.' That was my aim. Therefore I was bothering you in so many ways."

"It is your incredible mercy, Prabhupāda," said Svarūpa Dāmodara.

"Because I cannot use the technical words," Prabhupāda said, "and he can do that. So I wanted that he should be trained up."

Girirāja arranged that one of the newly elected Janata party members of Parliament come and see Śrīla Prabhupāda. The gentleman, Mr. Ratan Singh Rajda, was eager to meet the leader of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. So while Mr. Rajda had been attending a political rally at Sivaji Park, Girirāja had come to arrange the meeting.

"When I went there," Girirāja told Prabhupāda later, "he asked me to sit with them on a dais. So I did. But was that wrong?"

"Why not?" said Prabhupāda. "He is honoring you."

Girirāja said that Mr. Rajda had asked to be the first speaker at the rally, so that he could be free to come and meet with Śrīla Prabhupāda before leaving the next day for a meeting with the central government in Delhi. Girirāja explained that Mr. Rajda was a member of Parliament from Bombay South, which was the most prestigious district, and that he had formerly helped ISKCON in their case against the attempted demolition of the temple.

Mr. Rajda entered the room and made a respectful gesture of obeisance to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He said he had met Śrīla Prabhupāda once, but since then he had been in jail for nineteen months. Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed surprised. "Jail?" he asked.

Mr. Rajda explained that he had been jailed during Indira Gandhi's political emergency. More than 150,000 "patriotic people" had been imprisoned, he said, including J. K. Prakash and the present prime minister, Morarji Desai.

"When Girirāja told me that you were here," said Mr. Rajda, "I told him definitely I would like to ask for darśana."

"This attempt at material adjustment..." Prabhupāda began, speaking slowly. "Just like we felt a little danger under the regime of Indira Gandhi. Now we have another feeling This is material

adjustment. Material adjustment may be temporarily beneficial, but that is not permanently beneficial."

Mr. Rajda replied, "Unless there is adhyātmika adjustment, there cannot be lasting benefit." Mr. Rajda was obviously acquainted with the Sanskrit Vedic knowledge, and he was also aware of the value of going to see a saintly person.

Prabhupāda persisted, however, in making the point that people do not really understand spiritual life. He described that the material body is made of different elements, and yet the living being is different than these elements. "Unless we understand this fact," he said, "which is very nicely explained in the Bhagavad-gītā, this material adjustment will never make us happy."

Mr. Rajda followed Prabhupāda's point but asserted that a great change had taken place since the elections. "The basic difference," he said, "is that formerly there was no moral code observed by the rulers." He was entirely agreeable—or wanted to be—with Śrīla Prabhupāda, yet they were speaking on different levels. Both asserted that spirituality was needed in government, but Mr. Rajda's political conclusion was that such spiritual reform was now present in his political party.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, continued to speak of people who talk of God yet don't even know the identity of the soul. He didn't specify whether this criticism applied to the former or to the present political party, although his remarks seemed to include both. Whoever was not in transcendental knowledge, whoever tried to work in the material field without knowing the difference between spirit and matter, would come to the same inglorious end.

"No," said Mr. Rajda, "the last rulers, most of them were Communists. They said religion is opium. They didn't believe in religion at all."

"Therefore," Prabhupāda said, "they say something, we say some thing, he says something, you manufacture something. But nobody knows what is reality. That is the difficulty. Unless you know the reality, to suggest and say, 'I suggest it,' does not mean that it is a solution. This is going on all over the world. Na te viduḥ svārtha-gatiṁ hi viṣṇuṁ. [S.B. 7.5.21] The external features, these material features—they are concerned with that. Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence. But they do not know that beyond this, there is another element. Unless you come to that knowledge, there is no question of welfare activities. That knowledge is available in India."

Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted Mr. Rajda's visit as sincere and serious, and so he wanted to convince him to fully accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness if he was really serious about introducing principles of dharma and morality into government. Real dharma had to start with an acceptance of self-realization as the all-important goal of life. It could not succeed just by rubber-stamping the government as religious.

"Now we have got good government," Śrīla Prabhupāda conceded. "Very nice. Now you should take advantage of the privileges which are there in India. The Bhagavad-gītā is there. If you take directions from Bhagavad-gītā, then the whole human society will be benefited. That you do not know. That is the defect. Even big, big leaders, they profess to be students of Bhagavad-gītā, but they do not know anything, although it is clearly stated. Who is the leader in India who does not

know Bhagavad-gītā? Everyone knows. Even Morarji Desai, when he was to be arrested by the leaders of government, he said, "Wait, let me finish my reading of Bhagavad-gītā.' Is it not?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Rajda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "“Let me finish my Bhagavad-gītā, then you can harass me.”"

Mr. Rajda added that Mr. Desai was also studying the Bhagavad-gītā very minutely while he was in jail.

"But now," said Prabhupāda, "he says that "Janata is my God.' Did he not say this recently?" Mr. Rajda admitted that Morarji Desai had stated that, but that he had later clarified it.

"It is the government's responsibility to make people God conscious," Śrīla Prabhupāda argued. "It is a very simple thing. God personally is explaining how to become God conscious. It is a very simple thing: mān-manā bhava mad-bhaktaḥ. [Bg. 9.34] Even a child can do it, so why not leaders? Then their example should be followed. Why don't they do this, this God consciousness? Do it seriously. Then everything will be all right. They are defying the existence of God and reading Bhagavad-gītā. This is their position."

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained to Mr. Rajda how he had been propagating the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement virtually alone. For years he had worked in the West, and now he was bringing his movement to India. "Cooperate with us," he said. "You are so kind; you have come to see me. You have got desire. So let us take it seriously."

Mr Rajda seemed very moved, and replied, "Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Correct."

"It is serious," said Prabhupāda, "but nobody has taken it seriously. Bhagavad-gītā is popular book. Everyone takes the Bhagavad-gītā and says, "I am a student of Bhagavad-gītā." But if the leaders of a society really set the example, others will follow."

"That's correct," said Mr. Rajda. "A serious effort should be made. Only lip service will not help. That is correct." Mr. Rajda reminded Prabhupāda how he had supported the Juhu temple at the time of the attempted demolition.

"So you have given a great service," said Prabhupāda. "Now it is not only not demolished, but it is standing there."

"It is standing," affirmed Mr. Rajda, "and a very nice temple."

Mr. Rajda mentioned the possibility of a meeting between Śrīla Prabhupāda and Morarji Desai. He said it could be arranged if it was convenient for Prabhupāda.

"My life is dedicated for this purpose," said Prabhupāda. "It is convenient for me at any time. I am not keeping good health at the moment, yet still I have come. I am just trying, even up to the last moment of my life. If I can deliver some good to these people—that is my determination. What is this life? Life will end today or tomorrow or day after. But if you live just to the point, that is the idea. Otherwise, trees are also living—thousands of years. What is the benefit?"

Mr. Rajda confirmed that the meeting could definitely be arranged. He would see the prime minister and fix up a time.

"So," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "there's some Kṛṣṇa's purpose that you were elected."

"It is through His blessings," said Mr. Rajda.

"Take advantage of His blessings," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Do some service."

On the last scheduled evening of the paṇḍāl, the chief minister of Maharashtra gave the introductory speech. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, did not attend. When the devotees asked to extend the paṇḍāl another week, Prabhupāda agreed, but said he would move to his now-ready quarters at Hare Krishna Land.

Before leaving, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke with Mr. and Mrs. Mahadevia. Prabhupāda had one of the devotees purchase a nice sārī and he presented it to Mrs. Mahadevia. "I stayed with you, and this is just my remembrance of thanks, so don't refuse." He gave a tape recorder to Mr. Mahadevia, a sārī to the Mahādevias' daughter Priti, and money to their servants. Mrs. Mahadevia was very pleased but she protested, saying it was a traditional duty and a pleasure for them to receive Prabhupāda in their home. Previously Śrīla Prabhupāda had been playing the tape recorder in Mr. Mahadevia's presence, and Mr. Mahadevia had admired the sound reproduction. Now, when Śrīla Prabhupāda gave him the tape recorder, he protested. "No, Prabhupāda, I was not telling you that you should give me that tape recorder. I was just telling you that it's a good piece."

"No, no," Prabhupāda insisted, "this is for you. You must keep it."

As Śrīla Prabhupāda entered his beautiful quarters at Hare Krishna Land, he remarked that no one could outdo Surabhi Swami. "I think I haven't such a place to live anywhere in the world," he said. "Los Angeles and New York are big, big cities, and London, Paris—but nobody can present such luxurious royal palace."

Seeing how the one large room was arranged to facilitate his different activities, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "This is like my room at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. In one corner I am writing, in another corner I am sitting, in another corner I am taking prasādam." The comparison was odd, since the Rādhā-Dāmodara place was a tiny cell, yet Śrīla Prabhupāda saw them as related: the beginning in Vṛndāvana and the apex in Bombay. In either place, he was the same person, humbly taking a little prasādam, writing his books, and ambitiously planning for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda discussed with several of his disciples and Dr. Sharma about his daily routine in Bombay. He said he would come down for darśana of the Deity and would lecture once a week on

Sunday. On special occasions he would see a visitor in his quarters, but rarely. "Generally," he said, "people come to visit and say, 'How are you? How are you feeling?' And he takes a half hour even. So what is the use of wasting time like that, 'How are you?' Everyone knows that I am not feeling well."

"So they can come to the temple room in the morning," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "If they actually want to see me, I am going there. They can see me for a half hour. And for talking, there is no need of talking, 'How are you? How are you feeling?' This is not talking."

"Instead," said Gargamuni Swami, "they can buy some of your books downstairs."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, nodding approvingly. "This is a waste of time. I want to stop this, to answer all these things, 'How are you?' " By saving his time and energy, he said, he could work on his book writing. Devotees assured him that everyone would appreciate this schedule and would be happy that he was working on the Tenth Canto.

"I think I shall be able to work from today," Prabhupāda declared. "Now I have got very nice place, full freedom. So there will be no difficulty."

That Prabhupāda would not take any morning walks went without saying. Everyone closely involved with Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to accept a new way of living, with no morning walks and very few classes. Someone suggested that Prabhupāda might like to walk on the roof, but even that seemed to be too difficult.

"No, one story I can go," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Not now, but I can go. So you are trying so much for my comfort, I do not know whether I shall be able to repay you. But I shall try my best. It is not possible to repay your debt, you are so kind. So I can simply pray to Kṛṣṇa to give His blessings to you, so that you may remain very steady in devotional service and preach His message all over the world. Otherwise, I have no other means. Without your help, I could not do anything. So you are very kind. Kindly continue your cooperation. This is the movement for para-upakāra [doing good for others]. I have got report from our other temples all over the world—they are doing very nice. Is it not? Other temples outside India, they are doing very nice." Svarūpa Dāmodara, who had recently come from the West, told about the successful standard of devotional service in the temples there.

Prabhupāda said he wanted silence so he could do his work, and he told a little story about a woman whose tinkling bracelets disturbed her husband. The husband took one bangle away, but still he was disturbed by the "tink-tink-tink." He took away another bangle and another, until there was only one left. Then there was no more "tink-tink-tink." Prabhupāda specifically asked his secretaries not to gather and talk in the outer room. "Remain always one," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "and read books. Then there will be no noise. And as soon as you become two— 'tink-tink-tink.' That I don't want."

"It won't happen," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "If anyone comes to see me, I will go out of the apartment."

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "in this way arrange. It should remain always quiet and serene."

"These are your quarters," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "No one else should come."

"And we shall arrange for seeing our own men at a time," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "But the principle should be silence. That will be all right. I will be free to work."

Prabhupāda continued to appreciate his new situation. The rooms were well ventilated, with plenty of sunlight. Other ISKCON buildings, like the Bhaktivedanta Manor in London, were very good, he said, but in most seasons he couldn't open the doors or windows, because of the cold. "You have to remain packed up," he said. "In Detroit and London, you cannot open a window." But here in Bombay the temperature was ideal, and the area outside Prabhupāda's window was verdant.

Days went by, and most devotees in Bombay never got to see Prabhupāda. They were all used to having him come down in the morning and walking with them for an hour on Juhu Beach. And they were used to having him come to greet the Deities, give classes, and give darśana in the afternoon. He had always been open, especially in India, allowing anyone to see him at almost any time. He had always received them warmly and listened to their problems or questions with great sympathy. So for them not to be able to see him, even while he was living in their midst, was traumatic. Only two or three secretaries stayed with him, and whenever other devotees came into his rooms to see him, they would feel that they were taxing him and would leave at the first opportunity.

Unexpectedly one morning Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared in the temple room, and the few devotees removed Prabhupāda's picture from the vyāsāsana so he could sit down. He hadn't given any warning that he was coming, and many of the devotees were absent. But the word spread that Prabhupāda was there, and the devotees came running.

After the guru-pūjā āratī, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke to the assembly of devotees. He said he was sorry that he couldn't come down more often and that he wanted to cook for all the devotees and serve them. On Sunday, he said, he would cook a feast and invite all the devotees up to his quarters. "I shall come daily to the temple," he said, "and I shall remain up to eight for our darśana and talks, if there is any comment. Generally every day it will be done. And on Sunday you can fix up some time. I will speak in the evening. And then Kṛṣṇa's desire, as He likes. But for the time being, this arrangement."

Prabhupāda's humility and his exactly reading the minds of the devotees made them feel ecstatic love for him. Some of them had even been thinking that Prabhupāda had forgotten them and that other things had become more important for him. But now he was reassuring them. Although he appeared to be incapacitated, he was fully reciprocating with his disciples. He was telling them that as they were controlled by him, so he was also controlled by their loving service.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then explained the significance of guru-pūjā, analyzing some of the words in the song the devotees sang each morning during the ceremony. "So the necessity is prema-bhakti," he said. "Prema bhakti jāhā hoite avidyā vināśa jāte, divya-jñāna. So what is that divya-jñāna?"

Prabhupāda explained that it was the duty of the guru to awaken divya-jñāna, or superior knowledge of the self. Because the guru reveals divya-jñāna, he is worshiped. For the nondevotee, divya-jñāna is never manifest, and one thinks of himself in terms of his body—as American, Hindu, or Muslim.

“So we worship the guru,” said Prabhupāda, “because he gives us superior knowledge. Not this knowledge of how to eat, how to sleep, how to have sex life and defend. Generally, the political leaders, the social leaders, they give this knowledge: how to eat, how to sleep, how to have sex, how to defend. The guru has no business with these things. He has divya-jñāna, superior knowledge. That is required. This human form of life is an opportunity to awaken that: divya-jñāna hr̥de prokāśito. And if he is kept in darkness about that divya-jñāna, then life will be lost. Remember this. It is a very risky life to be once again thrown into the waves of birth and death. We do not know where we will go. It is very serious. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is divya-jñāna. It is not ordinary knowledge.

“So you should always remember these words, divya-jñāna hr̥de prokāśito. And because the spiritual master enlightens with divya-jñāna, one feels obliged to him. Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo/ yasya prasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi.* So this guru-pūjā is essential, just as the Deity worship is essential. It is not cheap adoration. It is the process of enlightenment, of divya-jñāna. Thank you very much.”

Not only was Prabhupāda reminding his disciples that he hadn't forgotten them, but he was also reminding them that they should not be absent from the guru-pūjā and worshipful thoughts of the spiritual master, even if he was not able to personally come before them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda mostly stayed alone in his room, and during the day he would move from one desk to another, either to dictate the Bhāgavatam, to take prasādam, or to speak to guests. He was especially prolific at his writing. Rising at one or two in the morning, he would dictate ninety, a hundred, and occasionally almost two hundred digits on his dictating machine. This was more than he had done in months.

But he had little appetite. He could not eat anything heavy, and sometimes he had no appetite even for a cup of milk. Pālikā dāsī and sometimes Kṣīracorā-gopīnātha, a Bengali devotee, were the cooks. Śrīla Prabhupāda liked Kṣīracorā-gopīnātha's śukta, made from nīm leaves, eggplant, bitter melon, potato, sweet potato, and yogurt.

One morning Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for orange juice, but there were no oranges in the kitchen. Gopīnātha ran to get them, but when he returned, Śrīla Prabhupāda was ringing his bell. Gopīnātha rushed in and told him, “I am just coming. It takes time to make the juice.” After a few minutes, when the juice did not come, Śrīla Prabhupāda began repeatedly ringing his bell. As Gopīnātha at last entered with the juice, Prabhupāda spoke out angrily, “I am sick with no appetite, and when I have a little hunger, then you take hours!” He said he didn't want the juice, but Gopīnātha put it on the table anyway.

Śrīla Prabhupāda picked the glass up and drank. “You are serving me so nicely,” he said quietly. “I am always chastising you. When one gets old, he becomes short-tempered.” Gopīnātha had not felt

bad about the reprimand, but on these humble words from Śrīla Prabhupāda he felt terrible. Gopīnātha became so emotional that he could hardly speak. Yet he managed, in a choked voice, to say, "Please, Śrīla Prabhupāda, don't speak like that. I make mistakes, and if you don't correct them, then who will?"

There were many little personal exchanges like this between Śrīla Prabhupāda and his assistants, but sometimes he would be more silent and inward than they had ever seen him before. He would spend time chanting and reading, and only on special occasions would he see a guest.

Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed to an interview with Mr. Koshi, assistant editor for *The Current* magazine. Mr. Koshi's approach was not reverent but provocative, in search of a lively interview. Prabhupāda was interested in speaking to many people through a magazine article, but he had no interest in flattering the editor or in compromising. Especially of late, as at the Bombay paṇḍāl, Prabhupāda was speaking in the most plain, direct words. Whoever approached him he informed about Kṛṣṇa and their illusion in not accepting Kṛṣṇa. Mr. Koshi asked Prabhupāda why he had been recognized first in countries other than India.

"Because they [Indians] are so poor that they cannot purchase diamond," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "But diamond must be there. They are so poor-hearted, their education has been so poorly given, that they cannot understand."

"Poorly given?" asked Mr. Koshi.

"Yes," replied Prabhupāda. "They are teaching, 'You are this body. Jump like cats and dogs.' That's all. That is nationalism? It is, 'You are this body. Jump like cats and dogs.' A group, as a group of crows gather together—caw, caw, caw. That has been taught. Make a group and crow. But you don't find this word nationalism in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. These are all borrowed words."

"So what is your alternative?" asked Mr. Koshi.

"We are preaching internationalism," said Prabhupāda. "Everyone welcome. Come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Here is Christian, Hindu. Here is African, Muhammadan—everything. That is real United Nations. If they were thinking that 'I am American,' then why are they after a poor Indian man? Indians are known outside India as poverty-stricken, and that's a fact. But actually we are not poverty-stricken. If we cultivate our own standard of knowledge, *Bhagavad-gītā*, then we are the richest. We can give the whole world these gifts."

Prabhupāda said it was regrettable that scholars and politicians pretend to be students of *Bhagavad-gītā* without even knowing the difference between the body and the owner of the body. They do not even know the first lessons of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

"So what is the solution?" asked Mr. Koshi.

"Solution!" Prabhupāda shouted. "You learn it!"

"But they don't want to do it," said Mr. Koshi.

"Then they will go to hell," said Prabhupāda. "What can be done? If you want to cut your own throat, you can do it. Who can save you? But our duty is to say, 'Don't commit suicide.' "

Mr. Koshi made a case for drinking tea and coffee; he could not see how such things were sinful. Prabhupāda explained that they were intoxicants.

"But there are several million like me," said Mr. Koshi.

"Millions of zeros does not mean one," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Zero is zero. If there are seven million zeros added together, you cannot make one."

Mr. Koshi also wanted to ask why Prabhupāda paid so much attention only to Kṛṣṇa, since there were hundreds of gods in the pantheon, but Prabhupāda stopped him short.

Mr. Koshi asked about the brainwashing controversy.

"There are so many accusations," said Prabhupāda, "but now it is in the court."

"But you don't require recognition of any court, do you?" asked Mr. Koshi.

"You require," replied Prabhupāda laughing. "I don't require. You require."

"Yes, until then," said Mr. Koshi, "there is doubt."

"Because you are after the court," said Prabhupāda, "after the judges. We are not after anyone. We are after one—Kṛṣṇa. That's all. We know what our duty is."

Śrīla Prabhupāda further explained that opposition was coming in America because so many young people were taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Young men are taking it," said Prabhupāda. "They are preaching. They have sacrificed their lives. So they are intelligent persons. They can understand that they should not die. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not an old man's recreation."

"No," said Mr. Koshi, "but you are responsible for it."

"I am not," said Prabhupāda. "Kṛṣṇa is responsible. I am just distributing. My duty is to distribute. That's all."

Mr. Koshi asked Prabhupāda if he was happy with the way his movement had spread, and Prabhupāda replied, "Why shall I not be happy? I am not manufacturing anything. That is not my business."

Jumping from one topic to another in search of readable magazine copy, Mr. Koshi asked Prabhupāda, "How is your health now?"

"Not good," Prabhupāda replied. "Health or no health, it is the outward machine. That doesn't matter. But if it is a good machine, then it helps. That's all. Otherwise machine good or bad, it doesn't matter."

"What happens when the machine stops?"

"If your machine has stopped," Prabhupāda said, "you take another machine. That's all. Why shall I be overwhelmed, 'Oh, machine is going, machine is going'? Therefore, Kṛṣṇa says, 'You are lamenting for the machine, you nonsense. That is not the paṇḍita's business.'"

Mr. Koshi: "What is your typical day like? What time do you get up, and how do you spend your day?"

"How can I say?" replied Prabhupāda. "I have got so many things."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, sensing that the interview had gone about as far as it could profitably go, spoke up. "Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "I want to suggest that if he has some further questions, we could try to answer them, and then if there are still unanswered ones..."

"No," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "he has no answer on this spiritual matter. He will ask me some political questions. We have no function in politics."

Mr. Koshi disregarded the signal from Prabhupāda's secretary and went on with his questions. "You see," he said, "when I see a group of young people like these boys here dancing in the street, it is something jarring to my eyes. What is the necessity for the chant?"

"One man's food is another man's poison," Prabhupāda replied laconically.

"No, no," said Mr. Koshi, "there must be a purpose behind it."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "that is the way to spiritual understanding in this age."

Mr. Koshi asked about illicit sex, and Prabhupāda replied that sex should be used only within marriage, for begetting children.

"Don't you think that the children should be given freedom to choose voluntarily?"

"Do you want to give freedom to your children?" asked Prabhupāda.

"I am asking you," said Mr. Koshi.

"No, no," said Prabhupāda, "what is the use of giving freedom to a child with a razor? He will cut his throat, that's all."

"But at a later age perhaps."

"Later age, yes," said Prabhupāda. "That is enjoined. When a child is sixteen years old he can do as he likes. Not before that."

Now Mr. Koshi was ready to wrap it up. "What is your message to the world?" he asked Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda and the devotees laughed. "Again you ask me," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "After reading Rāmāyaṇa, you are asking me whose father is Sītā. I have explained already."

Before Mr. Koshi left the room, Prabhupāda requested, "Write nice article."

"Don't worry about that," Mr. Koshi replied. "It is my job."

Śrīla Prabhupāda made sure Mr. Koshi took prasādam before leaving.

Disciples continued to come to Bombay in hopes of getting direct instructions from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Much could be done through his secretary, avoiding "How are you feeling?" conversations, yet sometimes Prabhupāda did meet directly with certain disciples. He was still involved, at least through his secretary, in most of the important dealings of his movement and its leaders. By mail he heard Ātreya Rṣi's plans for introducing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Karachi, Pakistan, and he said the plans were intelligent. He saw and approved a new film by Yadubara. He met with Haṁsadūta Swami and requested him to develop the preaching in Śrī Lanka. He heartily approved Prabhaviṣṇu's going to preach in Dacca, Bangladesh. He heard of the need for strong preachers in Hyderabad, and when Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple, Śrīdhara Swami, came to see him, he asked him to go there. He saw Lokanātha Swami and encouraged him in his program of traveling by bullock cart and preaching in the Indian villages. Lokanātha had brought Śrīla Prabhupāda a Marathi translation of The Perfection of Yoga, and Śrīla Prabhupāda sat for some time listening to Lokanātha Mahārāja read aloud, although Prabhupāda said he didn't know the Marathi language. When an ISKCON Bombay pūjārī wanted to know if some śālagrāma-śilās were bona fide, Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed to see Them, confirmed that They were genuine, and advised how They should be worshiped.

Certain managerial affairs Prabhupāda would try to avoid, although often to no avail, such as concerning the delays in completing the construction work at Bombay. He could hear the sounds of the work, and sometimes it was noisy, but it was the slowness that perturbed him. Sometimes he would sit silently for hours and then remark to his servant or secretary that he was very upset by the construction delays. "You are sincere workers," Prabhupāda told the devotees in charge, "but no intelligence. I can see that this construction work is not going on. Am I to close my eyes? I can do that, but I am a sensible man. How can I close my eyes? They are all giving their excuses."

Śrīla Prabhupāda analyzed the different leaders and, on finding defects in each of them, concluded that they were incompetent to speed up the construction. When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested that maybe they should consult a life member who was expert in construction, Prabhupāda approved. So Mr. Mohatta, an engineer and life member, was brought to see Śrīla Prabhupāda.

At that time, the construction company was demanding that all past bills be paid before they would go on with the work. But Śrīla Prabhupāda said he wouldn't pay any more bills until the work was completed; then all bills would be paid in full. Although some of the devotees were more inclined to pay the company right away, at least partially, so that the work would go on smoothly, Mr. Mohatta at once appreciated Prabhupāda's reasoning and began dealing with the construction company on that basis. He got results, and Prabhupāda was relieved. Thus, although Prabhupāda was eager to retire fully, he did not feel he could remove himself from ISKCON management yet.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had no regular doctor. From time to time a kaviṛāja* might show up to give a diagnosis and some medicine. But Prabhupāda wouldn't take it very seriously. He didn't consider these kaviṛājas very qualified, and if the medicine tasted bitter or produced any bad effect, he would stop taking it. Everything was up to Kṛṣṇa, and a doctor couldn't change that. Prabhupāda mentioned the relative merits of Āyur Vedic and homeopathic medicines, but like any other mundane topic, medicine was something he showed little interest in.

He began having the newspapers read to him. Much of the news dealt with the downfall of the Congress party and the reform promises of the Janata party. From time to time Prabhupāda would comment, "These rascals, wherever they go, they create trouble." One time he commented, "Mandaḥ sumanda-matayaḥ—they have got a conception which is very, very bad. Their religious, social, and political conceptions are all condemned." Prabhupāda's conclusion: "What the fools and rascals are doing—that is the newspapers."

Prabhupāda directed Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and others to write letters and articles replying to some of the news stories. In one news editorial, the writer criticized formal education as corrupting the minds of children. "Educationists and researchers," the writer urged, "should look into the question and suggest remedies."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "That means the rascals do not know that godlessness and godless education will be like that. The teachers who are suggesting, they are themselves bad, and they are leading. They do not know what is the defect. You can write to them, 'You leaders, you do not know what is the cause. This is the cause—harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā/ manorathenāsati dhāvato bahih. Without God consciousness, there cannot be any education, there cannot be any good qualities. You do not know this, and you are simply crying in the wilderness. All the education and its propaganda is to make the world godless, although the most scientific knowledge of God is there in the Bhagavad-gītā.' Write him. Give him a slap: 'You do not know.'"

Another article, "One Hundred Million Harijans Pick a New Messiah," observed the death anniversary of Dr. Amritsar, the former champion of human rights for the untouchable caste. The writer lamented that the untouchables, termed "harijans" by Mahātmā Gandhi, were so downtrodden and presented such a baffling problem to the leaders and people of India. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa to write to the editor, explaining how Kṛṣṇa consciousness uplifts the most fallen. "We shall elevate them to go back to Godhead, whatever they may be," said Prabhupāda. "The defect was that Gandhi started this harijan movement—keeping them where they are and at the same time changing their name by rubber stamp to harijan. That must be failure. Just by artificially giving him money or stamping approval, it won't change anything. You have to

change him. And they have no plan for that. We should not misuse this word harijan, which means the personal associate of God."

Prabhupāda said that some of the senior devotees should regularly write on topics which he would suggest. More and more they should take up the management, write essays, and give lectures transmitting the arguments he would give them.

"Now you try to manage the whole world organization, all G.B.C. men," said Prabhupāda. "Suppose I am not there. Manage very nicely. But not independently to create havoc, but really manage. I am still present, so I will give you direction. Don't spoil it. We are in a very good, prestigious position. So much hard labor. I started with a very humble condition, and now it has come such an exalted position. You don't spoil it. That is my request. Increase. That will depend on your character, behavior, and preaching. Everyone was astonished how I started this without any help. My only asset was I was sincere. Everyone knows it. Otherwise, how is it possible?"

The days went by peacefully, with mild, pleasant breezes always passing through Śrīla Prabhupāda's room. His intelligence was ever sharp and alert, and yet his health did not improve. Bhavānanda Goswami had come from Māyāpur and had been intimately serving Śrīla Prabhupāda, but he had to return to Bengal for important preaching duties. Śrīla Prabhupāda said there was no doubt that Bhavānanda was the best at giving massage and taking personal care of his spiritual master. But the personal servant's duties were not as important as preaching.

Upendra, who had come to be Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal servant, was surprised to see how Prabhupāda's diet had changed. He could no longer cook the kicharī which Prabhupāda had previously liked. Often Prabhupāda would not even speak when he wanted something, but would indicate an idea or a desire with a nod of the head, a glance, a flick of the finger, or a sound like "Hmm."

From his room Prabhupāda heard the routine sounds of the day: the call of the cuckoos and the crows, the hammering of the marble workers, and the more distant car engines, horns, bicycle bells. He could also hear the pūjārī's bell and the conchshell at each āratī, as well as the kīrtanas and bhajanas in the temple room.

One morning while Prabhupāda was talking to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Girirāja, the recording of the "Govinda" song began, signifying, as it did in all the ISKCON temples, that the Deity was now giving morning darśana. "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is such a nice thing," said Prabhupāda. "Alone in this world I am struggling, and the so-called intelligent persons, they will not come. They have business. Why? If it is actually beneficial to the human society, why I should try alone? I will go on trying as long as I live. There will be no checking. But what kind of intelligent persons there are? We shall go on playing govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi. People may hear or not hear. We don't mind."

Girirāja had been temple president in Bombay during the years of struggle, and he had long looked forward to the time when Prabhupāda would be living in his majestic quarters and receiving the world leaders. Now that the gorgeous ISKCON center was becoming a reality, Girirāja couldn't

stand the idea of Prabhupāda remaining in solitude. So when he had asked Prabhupāda if he could bring him important guests, Prabhupāda had agreed.

Girirāja had arranged the meeting with Mr. Rajda, and now he had another member of Parliament, Mr. Ram Jethmalani, ready to meet with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Mr. Jethmalani had many doubts, however, and he had admitted to Girirāja that he didn't know whether Kṛṣṇa really existed or was imaginary. His main interest was in improving the slums. But he was willing to see Śrīla Prabhupāda—who was, after all, the guru of a worldwide movement—for a customary social visit. He would see him and then go on to a “thanksgiving tour” among the members of the Bombay constituency who had voted for him in the recent elections.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire was to enlighten the political leaders according to the instructions of Bhagavad-gītā. If that was not possible, then he wanted to elicit their help, such as in arranging special visas for foreign devotees and mediating local problems between the Bombay temple and the municipal bureaucracy.

Girirāja introduced Śrīla Prabhupāda to Mr. Jethmalani, and when Prabhupāda heard of the man's interest in improving slum conditions, he replied, “So we can uplift the position of the harijans very easily by this process of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.” He described Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda as the originators of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. And the purpose of Their movement, he said, was to alleviate the suffering of all the sinful people by giving them the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. But for such a claim, Prabhupāda said, there must be evidence. “You are a lawyer,” he nodded congenially to his guest. “So you want witness and evidence.”

“You don't blame me,” agreed Mr. Jethmalani.

“No, it is not blaming,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “It is a fact. Without evidence, without proof, how can a law be established?” Prabhupāda cited his evidence in a song by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, which told of two great sinners, Jagāi and Madhāi, who had been saved by the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. That was five hundred years ago, Prabhupāda said, but today one could see practically in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement how drunkards and illicit sex hunters had become saintly. “Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so nice,” he said. “Everyone can be elevated. So what is this harijan? We can uplift them.” Mr. Jethmalani asked why there was no emphasis in the Bhagavad-gītā on public and social service.

“There is no need,” said Prabhupāda. “This is animal conception of life. The dogs also combine together and make a sound, ba-ba-ba-ba. A human being can also do like that. But then what is the difference between animals and human beings?”

“But I don't know that animals, on the contrary, serve each other,” said Mr. Jethmalani. “It is men who do.”

“But what is the use of serving?” Prabhupāda asked. “What you can do? What service you have done? You cannot do anything beyond the laws of nature. Now Indira is in difficulty. What can you do? In one day, everything is finished. The law of nature is so strict. You cannot do anything. You are falsely proud that you want to help, but it is not possible. Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni. [Bg. 3.27] You

can only do this service of understanding you are not this body but you are spirit soul. Your business is this. This is dharma."

Mr. Jethmalani protested that nevertheless there was so much physical suffering around. Prabhupāda agreed that it was good to be sympathetic, but one had to actually do something to rectify the suffering. "So you must know first of all how suffering can be stopped," said Prabhupāda. "Then you do this, the needful. Otherwise, what is the use if you do not know the method? Duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam. [Bg. 8.15] I think you have read the Bhagavad-gītā?"

Mr. Jethmalani said he had. He could not understand yet exactly how the Bhagavad-gītā could be so practical, but he was listening respectfully to Śrīla Prabhupāda and appreciating his staunch conviction. But after a few minutes, he prepared to leave. "Anyway," he said, "I will be in touch with your Girirāja."

Prabhupāda continued preaching and simultaneously asked that prasādam be brought for Mr. Jethmalani.

"Sir," said Mr. Jethmalani, "I will take leave of you, and with your blessings. I hope we shall soon be—

"We are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness without any sectarian motive," said Prabhupāda. "This is unity on the spiritual platform. Try to understand." Mr. Jethmalani said he hoped that he could be of some use to Prabhupāda's movement.

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "that is required—that you want to cooperate."

"Whatever you order at any time," said Mr. Jethmalani.

"So inform him," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "and bring prasādam."

At first Mr. Jethmalani said he would prefer that the prasādam be brought down to his car so that he could hurry and get to the public meeting on time. But Prabhupāda insisted; that was no way to honor the Lord's prasādam. "Kindly wait," he asked. Mr. Jethmalani said he did not want to eat in Prabhupāda's presence, but Prabhupāda insisted and explained that this was an exchange of love. Finally, when the full plates of prasādam were brought in, Mr. Jethmalani was very appreciative. He had been so busy that he had not eaten all day, and he found the prasādam very tasteful.

"This is the real human service," said Prabhupāda, watching with pleasure as his guest began to eat, "—to give them knowledge." Mr. Jethmalani became more relaxed and friendly, inquiring about Prabhupāda's daily routine and about different aspects of how Westerners had taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Girirāja mentioned that earlier Mr. Jethmalani had been questioning whether Kṛṣṇa had an actual existence or whether He was imaginary.

"Why imaginary?" said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "He's in the history, Mahābhārata." Prabhupāda continued to give historical evidence of Kṛṣṇa from the śāstras, and Mr. Jethmalani listened submissively while continuing to eat. In due course, sweets were brought.

"In Northern India," said Prabhupāda, "first of all they give sweets. So they eat sweets to the heart's content."

"The best way to destroy your appetite is to eat sweets first," said Mr. Jethmalani.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, and they both laughed.

"So I am very glad that you have taken the prasādam," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I am pleased. Therefore, I wanted that you eat before me. It is a great pleasure."

On the best of terms, Prabhupāda and his guest parted, with Mr. Jethmalani promising he would confer with Girirāja about any problems. Girirāja was ecstatic. His dream of Prabhupāda at the Bombay temple, transforming lionlike politicians into gentle devotees, was being fulfilled.

Śrīla Prabhupāda would repeatedly mention that the ISKCON leaders should prepare to carry on without his direct management. One day he was recalling some of the incidents of his first year in New York City, when suddenly he began speaking of the future. "Don't spoil it," he said. "Now it is up to you, my senior men. I can part away from you. My health is not good. I am old man. It is not surprising. Now you G.B.C., young boys, you are American, expert. You have all intelligence. So you don't spoil it. Let the movement go forward more. You have a lot of nice places. Don't be anxious for... And even if I go, where is the harm? I have given my ideas and direction in my books. Just you have to see it. I think I have done my part. Is it not? Do you think so or not?"

"Yes, you have done everything. Still, we want the whole Bhāgavatam, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"That will be done," said Prabhupāda. "Even it is not full, there is no loss. You are competent. You can take charge. Now you can take charge of all the money, and let me remain free from management. My only request is, don't spoil it. I have sometimes chastised so that it may not be spoiled."

Prabhupāda said that for him to see that things were going on nicely under his ISKCON leaders would make him happy. "And I will go on writing books. That will be all right?" He said there was no need for him to eat any more. Since he was not physically active, there was no purpose in taking a lunch of capātis and rice.

Girirāja expressed that it was the pleasure of Prabhupāda's devotees to see him eat and relish prasādam. But Śrīla Prabhupāda disregarded this and said the brain could be kept active just by a little fruit or milk.

These moods—Prabhupāda speaking of retirement and fasting, even hinting of passing away—were only occasional moods. They were very real, practical, and sober, but he would soon turn to other things, promising his continual involvement with his disciples, his movement, and the world. After

a brief spell of such talking, he would again be commenting fiercely on the follies of the scientists and politicians.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that if a man could not accept the simple logic that there must be God, then he was obstinate and not even sane. "But these animals," he said, "they are passing on as big scientists, philosophers, theologians, and so on and so forth. We have to stop them. Na māṁ duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ. This is the qualification of the person who does not accept God. He is either duṣkṛtinaḥ, narādhamā, mūḍha, or māyāpahrta-jñāna. Māyāpahrta-jñāna means those who are highly educated but have no knowledge. Āsuram bhāvam āśrityāḥ means they do not believe that God exists. So as Kṛṣṇa conscious leaders, you have to chastise these rascals."

Girirāja said, "It's actually relishable to chastise them."

"Yes," Prabhupāda laughed. "It is a pleasure sport." As they spoke, Kṣīracorā Gopīnātha entered with the daily newspaper. "What is the news?" Prabhupāda asked. "What are all these rascals saying? Newspaper means all the statements of rascals."

Gopīnātha read the headlines aloud: "Honest Plea to Congress Chief Minister... Mischief Calls for Assembly Election."

"Again elections," said Prabhupāda. "As if election will change their quality. Let them remain rascals and simply by election replace one rascal with another rascal. Let them remain rascal but get votes. That is described in Bhāgavatam: śvavid-varāhoṣṭra kharaiḥ samstutaḥ.* The population is śvavid-varāhoṣṭra, and they are giving vote, another big paśu [animal]. Yes, this is democracy. The voters are paśus, or beasts, and they are selecting another big paśu. This is going on. The rascals do not know that if instead of a tiger we select a lion, then what is the difference? Simply names. The tiger was president. Now the lion is president. And both of them are animals. Where is the man, the human being? This is going on. And because they are paśu, they say, 'Oh, now there is lion. Now the tiger is driven away. Now there is lion.' This is going on. Am I right?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued his sharp, critical interest in his movement. When he received a report that devotees working with the BBT in Los Angeles were receiving salaries, he became disturbed. He enunciated his policy and asked his secretary to make it known. "Kṛṣṇa consciousness means vairāgya-vidyā, renunciation, and knowledge," he said. "They are taking advantage of the temple facilities for their sense gratification. Do you understand?"

Prabhupāda said that temple living was for brahmacārīs and sannyāsīs. If a gṛhastha was rendering essential service, the temple could provide an apartment for him. "But why salary?" asked Prabhupāda. "Where is the question of salary? Where is vairāgya, renunciation? Salary project should be stopped. If they want salary, they can work outside. In the name of Vaiṣṇava, he is drawing salary, living comfortably, having sense enjoyment. So all you, my officers, should think it over and do the needful."

Prabhupāda told how Lord Caitanya was living in the perfect situation in family life with His wife and mother, and yet He left it all to practice vairāgya. And thus He was praised by Sārvabhauma

Bhaṭṭācārya, “You are the Supreme Person, appearing as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, and You are teaching renunciation and devotional service.”

For weeks, Girirāja and his political acquaintance, Mr. Rajda, had spoken about arranging a meeting between Śrīla Prabhupāda and India's new prime minister, Morarji Desai. When it was brought before Śrīla Prabhupāda, the crucial question was whether Śrīla Prabhupāda would consider going to see the prime minister somewhere in the city.

“But that is not respectful,” said Prabhupāda. “Then he does not know how to honor a saintly person. Useless to meet. If he has no respect for a saintly person, if he thinks he is greater than a saintly person, then the visit is useless.”

“Yes, then the meeting will start on the wrong foot,” said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. “He has to come see you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. There are so many examples in the śāstra of big personalities coming to see saintly persons.”

“Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu refused to see the king of Orissa,” said Prabhupāda, “what to speak of going there.” Prabhupāda explained that he did not require anything from the prime minister, but for the benefit of the human society he could suggest some things to him. He said that it was a fact that sometimes, when in difficulty, a saintly person could approach a king. He gave the example of Lord Caitanya's devotee Gopīnātha Paṭṭanāyaka, and how the devotees asked Lord Caitanya to intervene to save him. But Lord Caitanya showed that it was a difficult job to approach such royal persons. With these guidelines in mind, Girirāja pursued the idea of a meeting

On the evening of May 5 at about midnight, Girirāja received a phone call from Mr. Rajda; the meeting with Morarji Desai was fixed for seven-thirty the next morning. The prime minister was only going to be in Bombay for one or two days and would be staying at his son's flat on Marine Drive. Although Girirāja knew that Prabhupāda had said he would not go to Mr. Desai, Girirāja wanted to consult Prabhupāda to see if certain leading disciples should go. Not wanting to disturb Prabhupāda, he tiptoed into Prabhupāda's hallway and peeked into the room. Prabhupāda was awake, sitting at his translating table, working. He looked up, saw Girirāja, and motioned him to come forward.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda,” said Girirāja, “I am very sorry to disturb you at this hour, but I just received a phone call from Ratan Singh Rajda.” Girirāja related that Morarji Desai was ready to meet them at his residence the next morning. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that he wanted to see if Morarji Desai would have been willing to come and meet him at Hare Krishna Land. “It's not that I'm proud,” he said, “that I can't go meet him at his place. But unless his mood is respectful, there is no use.” Prabhupāda said that this was the test of whether the prime minister had a proper attitude. He agreed that Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Girirāja should go ahead and meet the prime minister.

Girirāja: This meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda was one of the most intense and unique that I ever had, although I was able to be in his presence so many times. We were alone together, at midnight. Everyone else was asleep. All the lights were out, and it was just the two of us in this big room. He was sitting behind his marble translating desk, and I was sitting on the floor at his feet.

I said, "Prabhupāda, I am sorry that I had to disturb you like this in the middle of the night." Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "That's all right. Actually, with this sickness I cannot sleep at night. Even if I want to, I cannot sleep. Due to this illness, I cannot eat also. I am such an old man. There is no question of sex life and there is no question of defense either, so I guess I am liberated."

Of course, I knew that Śrīla Prabhupāda was liberated, not because of bodily circumstances, as he was humbly saying, but because he was in transcendental consciousness. He was always up at night, translating, not because he was sick and couldn't sleep, but out of devotion to his Guru Mahārāja and to Lord Kṛṣṇa. But it was a very wry, humorous remark, and I felt very charmed by the whole meeting and offered my obeisances and went back to sleep.

The next morning, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Girirāja were prepared well in advance for their meeting with the prime minister. Before leaving, they asked Prabhupāda what books they should give him. Prabhupāda replied, "Bhagavad-gītā, Kṛṣṇa book, and Teachings of Lord Caitanya."

"In Hindi?" asked Girirāja.

Prabhupāda frowned. "No, English."

The devotees went in their car to pick up Mr. Rajda at his flat; from there they would go to the apartment on Marine Drive where Prime Minister Desai was staying. After Girirāja had been ringing the front doorbell for about twenty minutes, Mr. Rajda finally appeared. He said that they had to wait just five more minutes, while he continued dressing and eating. Unfortunately, by the time they reached the apartment on Marine Drive, it was eight o'clock. They were thirty minutes late! As soon as they entered, the prime minister said, "You are very late." He was already meeting with some other people and said that he would see the devotees for a few minutes. He repeated that he had been waiting since 7:25. The devotees remained silent, not knowing what to say. They apologized and gave him Prabhupāda's books. Mr. Desai didn't say much and quickly excused himself, going back to his meeting with the others.

When the devotees returned to the temple, Prabhupāda eagerly asked what happened. He was very upset to hear that they had been late. "Very bad," he said. He remarked that Morarji Desai was known for his punctuality. They had missed a good opportunity, he said, by their misbehavior. When the devotees explained that Mr. Rajda had made them late, Prabhupāda asked for a more detailed report. The devotees said the main thing Morarji Desai wanted to know was why they were late.

"Did you tell him that Ratan Singh Rajda made you late?" asked Prabhupāda.

Girirāja and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa shook their heads. Prabhupāda became disgusted and said, "Why did you not say that he made you late? That you were on time, but he made you late? I know you are thinking that he is our friend and you didn't want to embarrass him in front of the prime minister, but now the whole thing is spoiled." Feeling very foolish and ashamed, the devotees sat silently before Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhu pāda reflected for a moment. "Anyway," he said, "these men will never change their views."

Śrīla Prabhupāda occasionally talked of traveling to a place better for his health. It was May, and Bombay was hot. Soon the monsoons would come. He had considered going to Kashmir, because the air and water were reputedly good for health; but no suitable accommodations could be found there, and the weather was too cool. Then one day he received a visit from Śrīmān Narayan, the former governor of Gujarat.

"You should take care of your health," said Śrīmān Narayan. "I hope you get better."

"Oh, this is just an old machine," Prabhupāda laughed. "The more you cure it, the more it gets worse. But my work never stops. That keeps on going. My main work is to write these books, and that is going on." Several other Indian guests were present, and they at once began recommending good places for health: Srinagar, Kashmir, Dehradun, Masouri, Simla, Hardwar.

"Yes, the water in Hardwar is good," said Śrīmān Narayan, "but better than that would be in Hrsikesha, where the Ganges flows: Whatever places are on the bank of the Ganges, the water will be very good. Pure Ganges water."

Śrīla Prabhupāda took these remarks seriously and turned to his disciples. "Yes, then we can go to Hrsikesha. This time is very good. Let us arrange for that."

From that moment, going to Hrsikesha became a definite plan, and Prabhupāda prepared to leave Bombay within a week.

SPL 52: "I Have Done My Part"

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

"I Have Done My Part"

The first week in Hrsikesha was idyllic, heavenly, with perfect weather and hopes of Prabhupāda eating and recovering. But on the eighth night, a violent storm hit, and with the storm came a drastic turn in Prabhupāda's health. He said the end was near, and he asked to go immediately to Vṛndāvana, in case Kṛṣṇa wanted him to depart from the world very soon.

The devotees in Hrsikesha had been in high spirits, and so had Śrīla Prabhupāda. While crossing the Ganges by boat, Prabhupāda had requested drinking water to be fetched from the center of the river. He had liked the lodge provided by his host, and he had even gone into the kitchen to show his disciples how to cook. Word had spread through the pilgrimage-tourist town that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami was present, and Prabhupāda had agreed to hold a darśana from five to six P.M. daily. The room had always been crowded at that hour with forty to fifty people, including Western hippies and seekers as well as Indians on pilgrimage or vacation. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's voice had been extremely faint, he had spoken with force, stressing Bhagavad-gītā as it is.

When an American hippie had questioned him skeptically, Prabhupāda had replied, "You cannot understand, because you are crazy." And when a lady had put forward materialistic welfare work as

the highest good, Prabhupāda had replied, “Your compassion is as valuable as blowing on a boil to heal it.”

Only a few disciples were with Prabhupāda in Hrsikeshā, and they had deemed it a wonderful treat. Not only had Prabhupāda directed the cooking, but he had told stories while cooking. He had said that only a lazy man couldn't cook, and then he told a Bengali story—the story of a lazy man—to illustrate. There was a king who decided that all lazy men in his kingdom could come to the charity house and be fed. So many men came, all claiming, “I am a lazy man.” The king then told his minister to set fire to the charity house, and all but two men ran out of the burning building. One of the two said, “My back is becoming very hot from the fire.” And the other advised, “Just turn over to the other side.” The king then said, “These are actually lazy men. Feed them.”

But on the evening of May 15, Śrīla Prabhupāda could neither sleep nor work at his dictation. The storm, a harbinger of the monsoon season, knocked out all electric power in Hrsikeshā. Since the fans were not running and the window shutters had to be closed because of the wind, the room became very hot.

At five in the morning Śrīla Prabhupāda called for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and said he was feeling weak. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa massaged Prabhupāda for an hour. Even at dawn the wind did not let up, and sand was blowing.

The storm and power failure continued the next night. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked Prabhupāda about the swelling in his hands and feet, and Prabhupāda replied, annoyed, “Why you are bothering? It is my body, and I am not disturbed.” But then he added, “From the material point of view, it is not good. Please consider how everything may be turned over to the G.B.C., so that in my absence everything will go on. You may make a will, and I will sign it.” He was talking definitely about things that before he had only alluded to.

Suddenly, at one-thirty A.M., Prabhupāda rang his bell, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Kṣīracorā-gopīnātha responded. From beneath his mosquito net, he said, “As I was telling you, the symptoms are not good. I want to leave immediately for Vṛndāvana.” If it was time for him to pass away, he said, then let it be in Vṛndāvana. Since he wanted to leave immediately, the devotees stayed up all night, packing and preparing to leave. Train reservations were not available, however, so they decided to go by car.

Śrīla Prabhupāda rode in the back seat of the small Ambassador, sometimes stretching out on the seat. Upendra sat at his feet on the floor, while Tamāla Kṛṣṇa sat in the front next to Dāmodara Paṇḍita, an experienced driver who drove fast but with utmost care. Often Dāmodara Paṇḍita would glance into the rear-view mirror and meet Śrīla Prabhupāda's attentive gaze. At one point, when Prabhupāda saw a man selling cucumbers, he asked Dāmodara to stop the car. Cucumbers, he said, were good for quenching thirst.

After four and a half hours they reached Delhi and stopped at the ISKCON center in Lajpat Nagar. It was very hot. The devotees watered down the roof, and Śrīla Prabhupāda rested there on a cot.

By five the next morning they were ready to set out for Vṛndāvana. At the Delhi temple, the devotees had given Prabhupāda a large plate of the Deities' prasādam, but he had only taken a few tastes. "Eating is finished," he had said. "I prayed to Kṛṣṇa to be freed from eating and sleeping, and it is happening. I have already given up mating and defending. Now all these material activities are finished with."

As they drove out of the city and into the countryside, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa noticed that Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed more peaceful. "You look very happy to be going to Vṛndāvana," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, "Vṛndāvana is my home, and Bombay is my office."

As they turned off the Delhi–Agra Road, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw for the first time the stone marker, "Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg." They soon met up with Guṇārṇava, who was waiting on a motorcycle and who joyfully sped ahead to tell the devotees at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir that Śrīla Prabhupāda was here. At the gate of the temple a big kīrtana party, including all the gurukula children, was gathered to greet Prabhupāda with chanting and dancing. Four devotees carried Prabhupāda on a palanquin to the temple hall, where he offered his respects to the two Lords, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. After the āratī ceremony honoring Śrīla Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda spoke briefly to the assembled devotees.

"If death takes place," he said, "let it take place here." Seeing his demeanor and hearing him speak these unexpected words, some of the devotees in the room began to cry. "So," he continued, "there is nothing to be said new. Whatever I have to say, I have spoken in my books. Now, try to understand it and continue your endeavors. Whether I am present or not present, it doesn't matter. As Kṛṣṇa is living eternally, similarly, the living being also lives eternally, but kīrtir yasya sa jīvati. One who has done service to the Lord lives forever. So, you have been taught to serve Kṛṣṇa. So with Kṛṣṇa, our life is eternal. The temporary disappearance of this body—it doesn't matter. The body is meant for disappearance. So live forever by serving Kṛṣṇa."

Despite the finality of these words, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to converse in his room with a few guests who remained after most of the devotees had left. A retired family man, a Mr. Bose, was present and told Prabhupāda how he was now living alone in the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Prabhupāda said, "You will not be able to adjust to this way of life." But when Mr. Bose expressed his determination, Prabhupāda added, "You have a very good family, so it is hopeful."

Śrīla Prabhupāda went on to recall some of his activities at Hrsikesha, and he spoke of how his movement was growing stronger around the world and how in New York the judge had made a very favorable decision.

A little later, the conversation turned to ghosts, and Prabhupāda told about the haunted house of Lokanath Mullik in Calcutta. Prabhupāda had also rented a "ghost house" in Lucknow. "I am not afraid of ghosts," he said. "I am ghostproof. In England there are also many ghosts. They are generally evil, and sometimes they even kill. They can be seen sometimes entering a latrine or sitting on a pillar. By offering piṇḍa one can free his forefathers from ghostly bodies. In Māyāpur there were Muhammadan ghosts, but not any more. By our chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa ghosts are driven away."

Prabhupāda began a routine. In the morning he would ride in the car at least a short distance down Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg. Although even riding was difficult for him, the morning air would be fresh and cool compared to the heat of the day, and the road, lined with nīm trees and shrubs, was pleasant. Each morning he would come back and faithfully, lovingly behold Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Then he would sit or rest in his main room and later move upstairs, where a desk and a chair as well as bed were set up on the outdoor veranda of his house. Here, also, the devotees had thrown water on the floors for cooling. His main room downstairs had an air-cooler.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was still prone to become involved in management, and he asked his secretary to report to him on the various ISKCON activities. "You become my eyes," he said. But to think that the Bombay project was not yet completed disturbed him very much. "I have worked so far to get done whatever is accomplished," he told Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "Now if the Deities are not properly installed in my presence, it will be a great shock." But ISKCON management was too much botheration, and Prabhupāda told Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "You must give me complete relief from management."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa mentioned that Prabhupāda would sometimes become upset if he was not informed about ISKCON management, but Prabhupāda said better not to inform him. "Now take it that I am dead," he said. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa took this remark to mean that the leaders of ISKCON should manage all problems just as if Prabhupāda were no longer present. They should relieve him so he would be free to think of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. And Prabhupāda confirmed that this was the right idea. "Give me that chance," he said.

After one day in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote,

I was staying in Hrsikesha hoping to improve my health, but instead I have become a little weaker. Now I have come back to my home, Vrindavan. If anything should go wrong, at least I will be here in Vrindavan.

Śrīla Prabhupāda called for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami. "There are two things," he said, "—trying to survive and to prepare for death. It is better to plan for the worse. Arrange to always have three or four men with me. Have kīrtana and read Bhāgavatam all the time. Now I am trying to take little food. Parīkṣit Mahārāja would not even take water."

Seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda's mood, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa mentioned the need for a will, and Prabhupāda agreed. A will, he said, was simple enough. Whatever he spoke, several men could sign as witnesses. He recalled how his spiritual master, just before a hernia operation, had made a very simple will on a scrap of paper. Although he never underwent that operation, years later the same will was presented in court and was accepted as evidence against the plots of some of the disciples.

"He was the original founder," said Prabhupāda, "so whatever he wills, that is accepted." When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked why Prabhupāda's Guru Mahārāja had not undergone the operation, Prabhupāda replied, "Everyone has their sentiment. He thought that the doctor was paid to kill him."

"Yes," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "because sometimes people were actually paid off to kill him. Actually, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you and your Guru Mahārāja were the greatest enemies of modern civilization in this century."

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, "This is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission. Bhārata-bhūmite haila... This is India's culture. The whole world is in darkness, and they are risking their life in the transmigration of one body to another. He does not know that he is eternal and that in a few years this fragment is passing away, this life is just a passing flash. This is the Vaiṣṇava's concern. What these rascals are doing? They are jumping like monkeys, wasting time. That is the Vaiṣṇava's compassion, para-duḥkha-duḥkhī."

When some other devotees gathered in Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa explained Prabhupāda's recent decision. "So Śrīla Prabhupāda has decided that the best medicine would be Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and kīrtana, and no need of any doctors who have promised to help save the life. We shouldn't bring them. And no outsiders."

"No medicine for the body?" asked a devotee.

"Oh, whatever medicine I am taking," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Yogendra Ras."

"He has tried so many medicines," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said. "Every doctor has come, and they have each given their medicine. And he has tried them. This medicine always works: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and kīrtana."

"Bhavausadhāc chotra-mano-'bhirāmāt," quoted Śrīla Prabhupāda. (He had been quoting it again and again.) "It pleases the ear and the mind, bhavausadhāc chotra-mano-'bhirāmāt, ka uttama-śloka-guṇānuvādāt. Make glorification of Bhagavān, and everyone will appreciate it—except the animal."

At Śrīla Prabhupāda's request, kīrtanas by a group of no more than four or five devotees and Bhāgavatam readings went on constantly, whether he was in his room, on the veranda, or on the roof. In the morning from five to ten and in the evenings from three to nine he would sit with his eyes closed, absorbed in the kīrtana, "the medicine for the disease of material existence, which gives pleasure to the mind and ear."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa promised to Prabhupāda he would read him no letters and bring him no visitors. Prabhupāda had long wanted this, and now it at least would come to pass.

The writing of the will would not be done with the attitude that the end had come, but in the spirit of "preparing for the worst." It also meant finishing things so they would not have to be done at the last minute. Prabhupāda was concerned that his movement continue securely, with all ISKCON properties in the possession of his disciples within the institution and all his instructions made clear for the future. These matters should be dispatched now in a will, and the G.B.C. men should gather in Vṛndāvana to make these last arrangements and to be with him. Once these things were settled, Prabhupāda would be free to continue writing his books with no worries.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa later asked Śrīla Prabhupāda whether his new decisions indicated that he was losing his desire to fight to live. Śrīla Prabhupāda indirectly admitted it was so. "Therefore," he said, "I do not wish to leave Vṛndāvana. If, by Kṛṣṇa's desire, I survive, then we shall see later on. Otherwise..."

Even though his secretary did not read him letters or bring him news, Prabhupāda went on thinking. "What about the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple?" he asked. He had been renting his rooms there for years, and the temple proprietors had often challenged his rights. This was just another of his multifarious worries in maintaining his preaching around the world. Prabhupāda advised that his disciples always live in the Rādhā-Dāmodara rooms; that would prevent the landlord from trying to use them for something else. Even while lying quietly, resting, Prabhupāda would turn over such problems in his mind.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa wanted to double check to see that Prabhupāda actually wanted all the G.B.C. men from all over the world to come. It would be costly and demanding, so he wanted to be sure that Prabhupāda really wanted it. When Śrīla Prabhupāda assured him that he did, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, who saw his service as responding to whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda desired, also spoke in favor of the idea.

"Because they love you," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "I am sure they will all want to come and be with you."

"Your love for me," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "will be shown by how much you cooperate to keep this institution together after I am gone."

The room was fully decorated with rose and jasmine garlands. The kīrtana party was singing sweetly and softly. Śrīla Prabhupāda would go for hours without speaking, and when he did speak, he was usually brief. Yet he covered the same range of topics as always, and in the same pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Recalling the contractor's cheating in Bombay, he said, "It is not only a sin to cheat, but it is sinful to allow yourself to be cheated. With so much effort and difficulty, both from my part and my disciples', the money has been collected, and now it becomes spoiled. I cannot allow this."

Śrīla Prabhupāda would usually make comments such as this while lying in bed. As soon as he would speak, some of the devotees attending him would come close to catch his words, and sometimes the kīrtana would stop.

The parts of Prabhupāda's daily schedule that remained the same as before were his rising in the middle of the night to translate Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, his morning massage and bathing, and his hearing news through his secretary. He had all but stopped his morning car ride, as well as his darśana of the Deities. Eating was almost nil. He asked to be moved from his bed downstairs to the one upstairs, and sometimes he would sit at his desk.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa read Prabhupāda a letter from Girirāja, more like a loving prayer than a letter. Girirāja had quoted a verse by Prahāda Mahārāja from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of my association with material desires, one after another, I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes, following the general populace. But Your servant Nārada Muni kindly accepted me as his disciple and instructed me how to achieve this transcendental position. Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?

Śrīla Prabhupāda was very affectionate toward Girirāja for his faithful, fearless service, and he listened with great appreciation, closing his eyes and drinking in every word of the prayer.

That same evening, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat up to receive a member of Parliament, Sri Sitaram Singh. Although he was appreciative that a highly placed man was visiting, he spoke on the absolute plane, exposing material illusions. Immediately, he attacked the narrow-mindedness of politicians with their party politics. He also exposed the rascaldom of politicians who claimed to support nonviolence on the basis of the Bhagavad-gītā. At times like this, the devotees with Śrīla Prabhupāda would almost forget that he was making preparations for the end of life. Later that night, after Mr. Singh had left, Prabhupāda said, "I can speak some more, or if Kṛṣṇa desires, then whatever I have given already, that is all."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was unlimitedly willing to speak about Kṛṣṇa and to help give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. But how much longer he would stay, how much more he would give, was up to Kṛṣṇa. With more time, he would carry on Kṛṣṇa's will in the material world. But if Kṛṣṇa's desire was that he should leave, then he would also accept that willingly. Even if he had to soon depart from this world, he could not simply shut off his burning compassion, his preaching spirit. Most of all, he desired that what he had started—a worldwide movement to save suffering souls—should continue.

The word was sent to all G.B.C. secretaries worldwide. Śrīla Prabhupāda might depart very soon, and he wanted them to be with him in Vṛndāvana. As soon as possible, the G.B.C. men left their duties and came to him. The last time most of them had been with him was in February, during the annual meeting in Māyāpur. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa informed them of Śrīla Prabhupāda's recent turns—how he had been preaching in Bombay but not eating, how he had gone to Hrsikesh and gotten worse, and how he had come to Vṛndāvana, sensing that the end was soon. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had explained that Śrīla Prabhupāda had asked that he simply be administered the medicine of the holy name continually, that the G.B.C. and sannyāsīs be gathered to chant with him, and that a will be made securing ISKCON properties and insuring the continuation of the ISKCON institution. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa also mentioned that Prabhupāda had said that their love for him would be shown by their cooperation in keeping ISKCON together after his departure.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami confided to his Godbrothers that his own feelings were mixed. It was a time of sorrow, and yet Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed relieved now that he had decided not to struggle to survive. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said he couldn't but feel happy at Śrīla Prabhupāda's relief from all concerns. Bhavānanda Goswami, one of the first G.B.C. men to arrive, told the others how he had said to Prabhupāda that on the one hand he felt sad that Prabhupāda was departing, but also joyful that he would be able to leave this nasty material world and rejoin Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda had approved the sentiment, adding that although his Guru Mahārāja had become disgusted at the end of his life due to the misbehavior of his leading disciples, he did not feel that; rather, he liked the

company of his disciples and felt they were doing their best in carrying out his order. But he also warned them not to spoil ISKCON and become another Gaudiya Math by splitting up.

The ISKCON leaders formed small groups and took turns in being with Prabhupāda and chanting and reading to him. He would often be sitting up in bed in his main room downstairs, and the high-ceilinged room with its black stone floor would be very dimly lit, though decorated with flowers and framed pictures of ISKCON Deities. His room was comfortable, despite the oppressive heat, because of the air cooler and overhead fans.

Sometimes Prabhupāda would clap his hands softly to the kīrtana, and he was always ready to hear and evaluate reports of his disciples' preaching. The main difference about Prabhupāda was his physical appearance. As one G.B.C. man put it, he looked like one of the great ascetics depicted in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, grown extremely thin like Dhruva Mahārāja or Rantideva, who performed great austerities while rapt in meditation on the Absolute Truth.

Śrīla Prabhupāda would alternately sit up in bed or lie down while hearing kīrtana or Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Now he was always surrounded by concerned disciples and he seemed happier. Some of the devotees who had been with him in Vṛndāvana just before all the G.B.C. secretaries had arrived could see that he felt more encouraged; perhaps by the sincere prayers of all the devotees a dramatic change might come.

Bhavānanda Goswami and Jayapatāka Swami brought reports from Śrīla Prabhupāda's beloved Māyāpur project. Bhavānanda said the temple was filled with transcendental activity, and the gurukula boys would chant Hare Kṛṣṇa even while sweeping the roads. Work was just beginning on a new residence for Śrīla Prabhupāda; it would be surrounded by fountains, a terrace, and a big pond.

"It has not yet begun?" Śrīla Prabhupāda asked. Jayapatāka Swami replied that the plans had been drawn and that the architects said it would be no problem. They could build right through the rainy season.

"How long will it take?" Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked on Śrīla Prabhupāda's behalf.

"Six months."

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "I think you are tied to this planet by the love of your devotees."

Śrīla Prabhupāda uttered a thoughtful "Hmmm. All right."

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda had indicated a will to live by saying, "All right," to Bhavānanda he said, "There is no hope of life. Therefore I have called the G.B.C. If I can die in Vṛndāvana... Kṛṣṇa can accomplish any thing, but from the physical condition there is no hope."

"But Kṛṣṇa is Parameśvara," Bhavānanda said.

Prabhupāda laughed. "That is another thing." If Kṛṣṇa liked, then he would live. But Prabhupāda wanted his disciples to understand the critical state of his health. "The brain is working," he said, "but the body is not allowing. Don't worry. Everyone will die today or tomorrow. I am also an old man. There is nothing to be regretted. It is up to Kṛṣṇa."

Dropping his reassuring stance and pleading as a helpless student, Bhavānanda asked, "What can we do, Śrīla Prabhupāda?"

"You can pray to Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda replied. "Kṛṣṇa is all-powerful. And one of the most important things is that when I am gone, don't spoil it. Keep it, Māyāpur."

Jayapatāka Swami gave glowing accounts of his recent preaching to both Hindus and Muslims in Dacca. "There have been no sādhus in Bangladesh for years," said Jayapatāka, speaking strongly and victoriously, though sitting like a child at the foot of Śrīla Prabhupāda's bed. "People are eager to hear about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Ten thousand people gathered. It was the biggest function in the history of the colony, either Hindu or Muhammadan. The Muhammadans are also interested. They don't know anything about Lord Caitanya. Many ask if we have any books on the life of Lord Caitanya. They like to read."

"That book Teachings of Lord Caitanya," Śrīla Prabhupāda interjected in a voice hoarse but full of life and interest.

Jayapatāka said they had prospects of getting a temple there. "Many young men are coming and asking very intelligent questions," he said. "They ask questions about our Deity worship, about guru, about hari-nāma. Very intelligent questions. There is no CIA rumor. There is no type of any bad talk about us. No envy at all. And because they are a little oppressed, they are always being challenged about believing in Kṛṣṇa—so that is why they are eager to understand."

"What about the Muhammadans?" asked Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"At one place," said Jayapatāka, "when Prabhaviṣṇu lectured in Dacca, a Muhammadan heard and came to him and said, 'What you are preaching is very applicable to the modern day. In my district there is nearly a majority of Hindus, but when they have their sādhus come and preach there, I find it very old-fashioned and very unacceptable. But your preaching we find enthusing.' So he arranged a program. Ultimately every Muhammadan that I have met has become interested, just because it was presented in a way that was acceptable to them. They say, 'You are Hindu?' We say, 'No, we are Vaiṣṇava. Vaiṣṇava means we believe in only one God. There is no one equal to Him. So you believe in the same thing.'"

"That is a fact," said Prabhupāda. "Asamordhva. There cannot be anyone equal to God or greater than Him."

"Many young men, both Hindu and Muhammadan, will join," said Jayapatāka Swami. "I am sure. But right now we are getting the society registered and getting our place."

"You did not get that yet?" Prabhupāda asked. "Get the place and get the society registered." Prabhupāda added that Jayapatāka should do everything very seriously. "It is increasing," he added approvingly.

When Rāmeśvara Swami came into the room for his kīrtana, he brought Śrīla Prabhupāda the newest editions of the Kṛṣṇa book trilogies and reported on how the various books were selling.

"Keep your health very nice," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "Live as many years as possible. Be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Then next life you go back to home—permanent life. There is no cheating, no politics, no personal ambition to fulfill. There is not any tinge of any personal salvation. Now can anyone point out that here is personal sense gratification? Can anyone? Can you say, 'Here is my personal sense gratification'? There is no such thing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is our desire—that we live with devotees and execute the mission of our predecessors. This is our ambition. Without ambition no one can live. Our real self-interest is to execute Kṛṣṇa's desire. So do it very carefully, and if one fourth of the Americans become Vaiṣṇavas, then the whole world will change... "

"In America now," Rāmeśvara said enthusiastically, "the book selling has surpassed last year. We are trying to double. We have not yet doubled, but it has gone beyond last year."

"It is going to double," said Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"By your mercy," Rāmeśvara added.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "Be doubly blessed." At these words the devotees laughed happily.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then turned to Kīrtanānanda Swami. "So New Vrindaban is developing. Be happy."

"We can't be happy if you are not there," Kīrtanānanda said.

"I am always there," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "When I see that everything is going nicely, then I am happy. Even with this body. Body is body. We'll have next body."

"Wasn't it Puru who gave his father his youth?" asked Kīrtanānanda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda nodded. "King Yayāti traded his old age."

"And you can do that," said Kīrtanānanda.

"No, why?" said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "You are my body. Then you can do it. There is no difference. Just like I am working, so my Guru Mahārāja is there, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Physically he may not be, but in every action we do."

"In the Bhāgavatam," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "you say that for whoever follows the guru, the guru lives with him eternally."

"So I am not going to die," said Prabhupāda. "Kīrtir yvya sa jīvati. One who does something substantial, he lives forever. He doesn't die. One has to accept another body according to his karma, but for a devotee there is no such thing. He always accepts a body for serving Kṛṣṇa, so there is no problem."

Rāmeśvara Swami informed Prabhupāda that the last volume of the Ninth Canto was at the printer, and the first volume of the Tenth Canto would follow in two weeks. Śrīla Prabhupāda inquired about whether it was more economical to print the Hindi books in India or America, and they discussed.

"Internationally all conditioned people are suffering," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "But you devotees are above all dangers. Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja knows that very well. He has no danger, sticking to that New Vrindaban program. There is always improvement. They eat first-class nutritious food. And what is that place in Pennsylvania?"

It was like old times, with Śrīla Prabhupāda hearing reports and correcting and inspiring his leaders to do more and more, assuring them that Kṛṣṇa would help them.

Rāmeśvara Swami described for Śrīla Prabhupāda's pleasure the great volume of Kṛṣṇa conscious literature being distributed. "At the end of this year," he said, "we will have sold at least sixty-five million books on Kṛṣṇa. Every year we are selling at least fifteen to twenty million books now."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "They ask, 'Why are you stressing so much on Kṛṣṇa?' But that is the only message. It will increase more. People will be inquisitive."

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to talk, but with occasional reflections on his present condition. "What is the problem?" he asked. "We are talking about Kṛṣṇa. So if all of a sudden I collapse, then what is the problem? Kṛṣṇa tvadīya-pada-paṅkaja...^{*} Ordinary dying is kapha-vāta-pitta, choking. But if in the kīrtana you die, oh, it is so successful. Not the injection and operation—that atmosphere. But in kṛṣṇa-kīrtana. That is glorious. Not oxygen, gas, dying, and so much trouble. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa—bas. And let me die, Kṛṣṇa. Never be disturbed. chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. For chanting you have got so much material. Now read something from this book."

Śrīla Prabhupāda reached over and opened Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and handed it to Rāmeśvara, who began to read.

One after another the G.B.C men arrived. Atreya Ṛṣi brought pomegranates and sweet lemons from Iran, as well as good news of the ISKCON restaurant there. Śrīla Prabhupāda listened with intense interest to Atreya Ṛṣi's report and then spoke for a while about the Middle East and how to best present Kṛṣṇa consciousness there. Kīrtanānanda Swami had brought milk products from New Vrindaban, and a sannyāsī came from Thailand with fruits and flowers.

When Ādi-keśava Swami came in, Prabhupāda beamed. He heard with great pleasure Ādi-keśava's report of the impact of the New York court decision on Indians around the world. When Svarūpa Dāmodara arrived he showed Prabhupāda the manuscripts for three pamphlets proving scientifically and mathematically that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the Absolute Truth. After each report

and greeting, Śrīla Prabhupāda would ask that the kīrtana be continued, and he would become silent, as the devotees sang softly, hour after hour: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. A very small pair of karatālas, the only instrument, produced a soft, pleasant ringing. The voices of the chanters were subdued, but their minds were firmly fixed in devotion to Śrīla Prabhupāda and the holy name, concerned that Prabhupāda could hear the mahā-mantra without interruption.

The devotees who were chanting experienced their own realizations while intimately associating with Śrīla Prabhupāda in this way. They could understand this was a most important connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda, to come into his presence and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and jaya śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya and read to him from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Śrīla Prabhu pāda wanted to hear the transcendental sound, yet he was simultaneously teaching his disciples. After his departure, they would retain the deep impression of the significance of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and they would go on giving the mercy to others. He was teaching them how to become pure devotees. He was sharing himself with them by having them chant very simply and read his books without speculation, so that later, when preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they would remember. Śrīla Prabhupāda would always be with them as they went on chanting simply and preaching without speculation. Whether he would depart now or later, he was preparing them.

Sometimes during the chanting Śrīla Prabhupāda would communicate unspoken feelings with his disciples. He might simply glance at one of the devotees, but that devotee would feel a surge of loving emotion and realization. Suddenly he would understand better how pure and compassionate Śrīla Prabhupāda was. And the devotee might recall how Śrīla Prabhupāda had come and saved him, bringing him to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus the G.B.C. men, while chanting and becoming purified, were rededicating themselves, hoping that Kṛṣṇa would accept them as surrendered souls. They asked that Kṛṣṇa bless them and make them fit for whatever happened.

"Do not leave me," Prabhupāda said at one point.

"Are you feeling better?" Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked.

"Yes, I am feeling a little better. Go on administering this medicine." At Śrīla Prabhupāda's request, the devotees staying with him between 1:30 A.M. and 3:30 A.M. read to him from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He would usually be on the roof then, sitting up in bed. A few bare bulbs would light the darkness, and all would be quiet and still except for the sound of the devotee reading. After one such reading, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Rūpānuga about the preaching in Washington, D.C. Rūpānuga replied briefly, and then he and Balavanta began talking about deprogramming. Then Rūpānuga said he had written "A Prayer to The Higher Authorities," and asked if he could read it to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

O superior Vaiṣṇavas!

O compassionate Ācāryas

of the Holy Name!

O supreme authorities,

Masters of our fate!

Have mercy upon us!

(We are not able to make any prayers,

but this is an emergency!)

Śāstra teaches that because of disciples' bad behavior, or to allow some personal service, or to exhibit ecstatic symptoms, the spiritual master may display bad health (although he so kindly says it is simply due to old age and personal neglect of his health—meaning that he has worked too hard to save us).

But we may not speculate upon the mind of the Ācāryas.

Please hear our petition! We pray for the kindness of our Grandfather, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who is by nature merciful upon his spiritual grandchildren.

We pray for the continued compassion of the Six Gosvāmīs, who are already famous in all the three worlds for saving conditioned souls. We pray for the benediction of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the most magnanimous Supreme Personality of Godhead.

We pray to Rādhārāṇī, Queen of Vṛndāvana, protector of our neophyte bhakti.

And we pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, whom we cannot even approach without the guidance of our Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We, the fallen servants of His Divine Grace, beseech all of our Masters—Please give Śrīla Prabhupāda more time! Time to insure the strength of this movement. Time to finish the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. And a little more time for us to spend at the lotus feet of His Divine Grace—that we may become pure devotees by his mercy.

We implore you—these ten years have passed so quickly, and we are caught far too short of perfection (You know that actually only ten milliseconds have passed in eternal time).

Therefore kindly extend his stay, lest we fall from the spiritual path.

O Vaiṣṇava saints!

O Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura,

Our eternal grandfather,

O Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana,

O Rādhārāṇī, Mother of bhakti,

O Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu,

the Master of all,

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, the final repose of our love,

O Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas—

Kindly have mercy on us:

Please don't yet take Śrīla Prabhupāda away!

Kindly grant this emergency prayer...

"Either way," said Prabhupāda, "I have no objection—to stay or leave." He said there was a Bengali saying that if a *ḍhenki* (a wheat-threshing machine) goes to heaven, what will it do there? It will thresh wheat. Because the thresher is constituted in a particular way, it will thresh wherever it goes. Similarly, the pure devotee, whether he is in the material world or the spiritual world, will serve Kṛṣṇa. In this way Śrīla Prabhupāda was indicating that he had no personal anxiety. But he had also indicated that although everything was dependent on Kṛṣṇa, the prayers of the devotees might influence Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, humbly considering themselves neophyte devotees, took it as a sign of Prabhupāda's protective mercy that he said their prayers could keep him with them and that he, although an eternal, exalted associate of Kṛṣṇa, liked to be with his tiny disciples. "My Guru Mahārāja was disgusted," he had said, "but I like your company."

A *sannyāsī* disciple read aloud a prayer he had written, petitioning the Supreme Lord for Prabhupāda to live for a hundred years. On hearing this, Śrīla Prabhupāda opened his eyes wide and smiled. But again he pointed out that he was not afraid of death. Wherever he was, he said, he was in *Vaikuṇṭha*. Especially being in *Vṛndāvana* and being surrounded by the *kīrtana* of his disciples was *Vaikuṇṭha*.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami told Prabhupāda that he had offered a prayer in the temple that morning while standing before Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Kṛṣṇa has done so many miracles, he said, so it would not be very amazing if He kept Prabhupāda alive. And Balarāma, who was supporting all creation, would not be weakened if He gave Śrīla Prabhupāda a little strength. "In this way," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said, "we may all pray to Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma to save you. We are not very important, but still They may hear."

"No," Prabhupāda said. "You are all pure devotees with no other motives."

Śrīla Prabhupāda regarded the petitions of his disciples as expressions of sincere affection, not at all improper spiritually. But he pointed out that it was ultimately up to Kṛṣṇa. He had His plan. In any case, Prabhupāda said that he would be all right. He told the story of a sage who blessed different

persons in different ways. The sage blessed a prince to live a long life, since after death he would be punished for his sensual life. The sage also blessed an ascetic to die at once, so as to be relieved of the suffering of his austerities and receive his pious rewards. But when asked to bless a pure devotee, the sage said that because the devotee had already obtained the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, his condition would be the same, whether he lived or died.

Prabhupāda knew, even better than his disciples, that there was much he could do if he remained in the world, but he simply wanted to see what Kṛṣṇa desired. He saw strong evidence, however, that his life was about to end, at least according to the condition of his physical body, and this in itself indicated that Kṛṣṇa's desire was that he soon leave this world.

The G.B.C. men met and decided that aside from Prabhupāda's will, which would secure the ISKCON properties, and aside from making all the bank accounts within ISKCON secure, there were also a few questions which they should put before Prabhupāda before it was too late. These questions, such as how future disciples would be initiated, would have to be answered; otherwise they would become a source of speculation and havoc after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure.

A selected committee from the G.B.C. came before Śrīla Prabhupāda as he sat up in bed in the main room downstairs. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami was to be the spokesman, but he felt shy and uneasy. To come directly before Śrīla Prabhupāda and ask about what should be done after his passing away might seem impertinent.

But it was necessary. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself had requested that the G.B.C. come to Vṛndāvana to take care of exactly this kind of business. Besides, for a disciple to feel foolish and awkward before Śrīla Prabhupāda was normal. And certainly the mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples continuing his movement was so grave that its importance transcended the awkwardness of the moment. Nevertheless, Śrīla Prabhupāda was Śrīla Prabhupāda, and even though apparently invalid, he was as awesome as ever. If he were displeased with the questions, then it would be frightening

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Satsvarūpa, "we were all asked by the rest of the G.B.C. to come to ask some questions. These are the members of the original G.B.C. as you first made it out. Our first question is about the G.B.C. members. We want to know how long should they remain in office?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke slowly and deeply. "They should remain for good. Selected men are chosen, so that they cannot be changed. Rather, if some competent men are found, they should be added." Śrīla Prabhupāda took the opportunity to recommend that Vasudeva become a G.B.C. member representing Fiji. "Add him," said Prabhupāda. "But the G.B.C. is not to be changed."

Satsvarūpa asked what to do if a G.B.C. member gave up his post, and Prabhupāda said that the G.B.C. body should elect another man.

"Our next question," Satsvarūpa proceeded, "concerns initiation in the future, particularly at that time when you are no longer with us. We want to know how a first and second initiation would be conducted."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating ācārya."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa interjected, "Is that called ṛtvik ācārya?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "ṛtvik."

"Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation?" asked Satsvarūpa.

"He is guru," said Prabhupāda.

"But he does it on your behalf," said Satsvarūpa.

"Yes, that is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru. So on my behalf, on my order—āmāra ajñāya guru. He is actually guru, but on my order."

"So they may also be considered your disciples," said Satsvarūpa, referring to those persons initiated on Prabhupāda's behalf by the ṛtvik ācārya.

"They are their disciples," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. Now he was speaking of initiations after his passing away. "They are the disciples of the one who is initiating. And they are my granddisciples. When I order you to become guru, you become regular guru, that's all. And they become the disciples of my disciple."

The G.B.C. members present were satisfied that Śrīla Prabhupāda's reply to the intricate inquiry was clear and conclusive. Later, he would select "some of you," and whoever he selected could become an initiating guru. What he had already described many times throughout his Bhaktivedanta purports was now being implemented: his disciples would become gurus and accept disciples of their own.

Satsvarūpa next asked about the BBT. "At present," he said, "no translated works are to be published without your seeing and approving them. So the question is, is there any system for publishing works in the future, works that you may not see?"

"That we have to examine expertly," Prabhupāda replied. He accepted the principle that future works could be translated from Sanskrit, but he cautioned, "But amongst my disciples, I don't think there are many who can translate properly."

"Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Kīrtanānanda Swami, "we think that you cannot leave us very soon."

"I don't want to," said Prabhupāda, "but I am obliged. What can I do?"

"If you don't want, then Kṛṣṇa won't want," said Kīrtanānanda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda went on to describe the special qualifications for translating Sanskrit Vaiṣṇava literature. It would take a realized soul, he said. "Otherwise, simply by imitating, A-B-C-D, it will not help. My purports are liked by people because it is presented as practical experience. It cannot be done unless one is realized."

"It is not a matter of scholarship," added Bhagavān.

"Lord Caitanya says," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "āmāra ājñāya guru. One who can understand the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order in paramparā, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you."

By repeating himself, Prabhupāda emphasized his point—he would select who would be guru. And he also repeated his other point: "So there is no question of changing G.B.C. Rather, one who is competent, he can be selected to add by the vote of G.B.C."

"Of course, if someone falls away," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa proposed, "just like in the past G.B.C. men have fallen down... "

"They should be replaced," said Prabhupāda. "They must be all ideal ācārya. In the beginning we have done for working. But now we should be very cautious. Anyone who is deviating, he can be replaced."

Their few questions answered, the G.B.C. men sat silently before Śrīla Prabhupāda, awaiting any further instructions but anxious not to tire him with their presence.

"So, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "there is a chanting party ready to do some kīrtana. Maybe they can come in?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda had already given the outline for his will to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami: The G.B.C. would be the ultimate governing authority in ISKCON. Three trustees would be assigned to each ISKCON property. The money in Prabhupāda's name in various banks would become ISKCON's property. A small pension would be allowed for his ex-wife and sons.

Even while the G.B.C. was gathered to make a thorough draft and make the will legal, Śrīla Prabhupāda received a visit that made him anxious over his ISKCON society. One of the Gosvāmīs of a Vṛndāvana temple visited and praised Śrīla Prabhupāda. But in the course of the conversation, the man asked, "After you, who will take charge of the property?" As soon as the gentleman left, Śrīla Prabhupāda called for Gopāla Kṛṣṇa. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Bhavānanda also gathered.

"In India you can understand there is an undercurrent," said Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Undercurrent," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa repeated.

"An undercurrent is going on," said Prabhupāda, "that after my demise it may be taken away from your hands."

"Whew! You understood that from this discussion?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"I understood it long ago," said Prabhupāda. "How are you going to guard yourselves?" Once again, it was Prabhupāda who had to make them aware of worldly wisdom.

"You ordered that we form a trust property with life-long trustees," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "Actually this property is the envy of all India. They are the best properties."

"They envy our prestige," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "our position—everything. Everywhere we are first class."

For Śrīla Prabhupāda, a will meant protection for his ISKCON. As Śrīla Prabhupāda had explained, a devotee has not a tinge of self-interest —everything is for Kṛṣṇa. But in his purity he must not be naive. ISKCON was a large, growing organization of properties and monies intended one hundred percent for use in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda called on the G.B.C. to be vigilant.

While his G.B.C. men discussed privately the details of the will, Śrīla Prabhupāda lay in bed, anxiously concerned about ISKCON's properties. He didn't attempt to eat, and Upendra had to massage his chest. Later that day, while surrounded by a sweetly chanting group of devotees, he again brought up the threat. "There is a big plot going on," he began. "They are very troublesome."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, who knew what Prabhupāda was talking about, said, "This should be done immediately—make a trust property."

"This shall be done," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Very nice." What Prabhupāda was asking was not unusual. But it had to be done soundly, expertly. And that meant Śrīla Prabhupāda would have to do it himself. He wanted no more management, but could his disciples assure him on this point of greatest anxiety, that the institution's properties and monies would be protected?

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa spoke up to assure Prabhupāda of the G.B.C.'s competence to deal with this. "This shall be done for all the properties," he said, "but especially here in India."

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Bhavānanda Goswami, "the trustees should be designated."

"Trustee without designation," Prabhupāda replied. "Where is trustee? I have already made one draft of trustees—for the Book Trust. In that style make it."

"Yes," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "So we will make up a draft on that style. And after the draft is approved, you can tell us which trustees you want."

"Oh, you can select among yourselves," said Prabhupāda. "Why you are taxing me?"

When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa mentioned that the three places in India—Bombay, Vṛndāvana, and Māyāpur—were the most important, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Everywhere." Then he added, "Among yourselves there is no strong man. That is the difficulty."

"That is a fact," admitted Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"All my child," said Śrīla Prabhupāda—a statement of love but not of relief. "And it requires a very strong man. That is lacking. In every minor detail I have to open my mouth. Anyway, whatever you have got, sit down and select trustees, and that format is there. Make it a trust. Among you Rāmeśvara is a little intelligent. Anyway, do your best. Otherwise, there is a very, very big undercurrent. They are waiting for your program."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa assured Prabhupāda that they would immediately have a meeting—"We will discuss these points."

"Oh, discussion I have already given you," said Prabhupāda. "Do it."

"What I meant," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "is we will execute it."

"All right," said Prabhupāda. "Don't delay."

At times like this, it became especially clear that the day was approaching when Prabhupāda's children would have to grow up and lead, manage, protect, and expand his society on their own. These might well be their last chances to learn directly from him and to be close with him for chanting the holy name and dedicating themselves utterly to carrying out his desires for ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed to be doubting whether his children would rise to the occasion, and that expressed doubt impelled them not to discouragement but to determined action to prove themselves loyal and competent.

That evening a G.B.C. committee reported back to Śrīla Prabhupāda that the will had been drafted, with provisions for the protection of all ISKCON properties through specified trustees. Rāmeśvara read the will before Prabhupāda, who made only a few comments.

"This will make it impossible for anyone to cheat," said Rāmeśvara.

"Yes," Prabhupāda agreed, "as far as I can see." Even regarding matters of utmost concern to him, he sometimes remained quiet. He had directed his G.B.C. men as far as possible, now he mostly wanted the medicine of the holy name. But what they had done was all right, and he was satisfied. As the committee was leaving his room, he softly exclaimed, "Jaya future directors of ISKCON!" And later, when alone with his servants, he shed tears and said he could now leave peacefully.

A few days later the final version of the "Declaration of Will" was notarized in the presence of a lawyer. The document began, "The Governing Body Commission (G.B.C.) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness," and went on to cover all the points of concern regarding ISKCON properties and management. Most of the twenty-three-member G.B.C. body was still gathered in Vṛndāvana, but their immediate business was completed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's health appeared to be slightly improved, a blessing the devotees and Prabhupāda attributed to the constant chanting. Śrīla Prabhupāda even ate (and digested) some fried food. He also spoke of attempting to resume his early morning translating work. The G.B.C. men, each of whom had pressing leadership and administrative duties within their respective zones, began to feel the need to return to their posts. Aside from their chanting shifts in Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, usually for three hours twice a day, they had no other service in Vṛndāvana. The weather was also unbearably hot, up to 120 degrees. When some of them expressed their plans to return to their areas of work, Prabhupāda gave his permission. They had been together for a week, and now, one by one, they began to disperse. Within another week most of them had left Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda and his small staff remained, and the constant chanting continued, performed by the devotees of the Krishna-Balaram temple.

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As June came in Vṛndāvana, the weather remained very hot. The sky, which had been a clear blue, turned hazy as the first moisture arrived. Between noon and four P.M., the ground was too hot for bare feet, and the residents of Vṛndāvana would stay home, confining most of their activity to either the morning or the late afternoon and evening. Even eating was excluded from the midday, since the heat killed the appetite. The Yamunā was shallow and hot, giving little relief. The cows were gaunt from lack of grass and feed, and occasional hot, searing winds raised dust clouds. Flies and mosquitoes died in the air. One of the few pleasant features of summer was the fragrance of bel flowers that climbed along the walls around Prabhupāda's garden, somehow thriving in the dry heat.

In the first days of June, Śrīla Prabhupāda experienced some hope of recovery. He asked to resume his morning rides, and when being brought down to the car, he said, "Soon I will get down and walk myself." His old friend from Allahabad, Mr. Ghosh, came and diagnosed his disease as anxiety for the devotees and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed. But he didn't follow the doctor's orders, since they included having his blood pressure checked regularly, and taking various medicines and special treatments. But by receiving massages from his servants, he felt he was improving. At this rate, he said, he would be all right after a month and a half. But he stressed, "I am not leaving Vṛndāvana until I am well."

One morning Śrīla Prabhupāda asked to go and see the Deities, and his men promptly moved him in his rocking chair before Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma. Sitting in his chair beneath the tamāla tree, Prabhupāda looked up at the transcendental brothers, while many tears glided down his cheeks. "They are dressed very nicely," he said. While he basked in the presence of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, he enjoyed the soothing shade of the tamāla tree. "The contractor wanted this tree cut down," he said, "but I would not allow. There are not many tamāla trees left. These worldly men do not know."

Śrīla Prabhupāda started coming down regularly each morning to see the Deities, an event that gradually grew to become a daily temple function involving ISKCON devotees and guests alike. Prabhupāda would sit in his rocking chair under the tamāla tree, and a devotee would lead kīrtana, while Prabhupāda and all the other devotees chanted responsively. For Prabhupāda's disciples, chanting with him in the courtyard of his temple in Ramaṇa-reti, Vṛndāvana, was the essence of the spiritual world.

Although Prabhupāda's body was apparently sick, he was still as alert as ever, and every morning he would notice who was there and who was not. The devotees grew to love this special opportunity to associate with Prabhupāda as he sat in his rocking chair, gazing at Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Vṛndāvana residents and pilgrims would also gather around Prabhupāda, often offering money, which they would place at Prabhupāda's feet. While the energetic young gurukula boys danced before Prabhupāda, and the pilgrims continuously flowed in and out, offering obeisances and rupees at his feet, and while one of his secretaries fanned him with a large cāmara whisk, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat gravely yet simply, with his attention fixed on Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

Sometimes he would go sit in the private garden adjacent to his main room. A devotee had built a plaster fountain there in the shape of a large pink lotus, and while Prabhupāda sat in the little alcove, surrounded by flowering vines, the splashing of the fountain pleased and soothed. An occasional monkey would come over the wall into the garden, looking for something to steal, and Prabhupāda would have it chased away. Otherwise he sat silently, conversing only occasionally with one or two disciples.

One day in the garden Śrīla Prabhupāda was recalling the simple but civilized life he had known as a child. He mentioned the various ceremonies his mother had observed during pregnancy to allay the dangers connected with childbirth. Though his voice was soft and weak, he was still inclined to speak. "So much care was taken for the children," he said. "Now these rascals are killing children. Most uncivilized life. Two-legged animals. Even in these days, in India in the interior villages, their life can be peaceful. They have enough grains, enough milk to live peacefully and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. And they are going there to give this sterilization." (Śrīla Prabhupāda was referring to Indira Gandhi's policy of compulsory sterilization.)

One of the devotees present had just come from West Bengal, where he had been traveling on a boat down the Ganges, preaching and distributing prasādam in the villages. Śrīla Prabhupāda began describing to him how in the villages they make a simple bread ball from attar (whole wheat flour) and bake it beside an open fire. "The same fire. It is called khāndi fire, using cow dung chips," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "They put one pot upon this fire and use it for dāl. Then after some time, you see if it is boiled—very nice. Then this ball should be cooked in ghee. It will be first class."

While the fountain splashed gently and the pigeons and green parrots fluttered and chattered, Prabhupāda continued to talk freely. He recalled his horoscope at birth: "After seventy years this man will go outside India and establish so many temples." He said he hadn't understood at first that he would actually have to go, but when he had finally gone to the U.S., he had had no intention of ever returning. Except for the stroke he suffered in the United States in 1967, he said, he would not have come back. "That means Kṛṣṇa desired," he said. "Otherwise, I had no plan to come back. Therefore I took this permanent residency."

"Do you regret having come back to India?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami.

"No," said Prabhupāda. "My plan was like that, to stay. But Kṛṣṇa's plan was different. When I was coming back [in 1970] I was speaking to Dvārakādhiśa [the Kṛṣṇa Deity in ISKCON's Los Angeles

temple], "I came here to preach. I don't know why You are dragging me back.' That was when I was leaving Los Angeles. I was not happy. But He had His plan."

"Pretty nice plan," commented Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued, "Kṛṣṇa said, 'Come, I'll give you a better place in Vṛndāvana. You were retired in Vṛndāvana, and I asked you to leave. Now you have to come back. But I will give you a better place.' So He has given me a temple a hundred times better than any other place. Is it not so?"

An article entitled "Śrīla Prabhupāda Seriously Ill" appeared on the front page of The Times of India. On hearing the article, Śrīla Prabhu pāda commented, "Unless they think Bhaktivedanta Swami is important, they wouldn't print this." Girirāja wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda that many sympathizers had phoned the Bombay temple asking for more information. One of the devotees had issued a statement which The Times of India carried a few days later on page three, under the heading "Śrīla Prabhupāda Now Better."

So was Śrīla Prabhupāda "seriously ill" or "better"? "I may live or die," he said, "in either case I am with Kṛṣṇa." But he confided, "I asked Kṛṣṇa to give me enthusiasm to continue up to death. A soldier should die fighting on the battlefield."

At Śrīla Prabhupāda's request, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was replying to all correspondence and signing his own name as secretary. As he wrote in one letter,

Under the circumstances, it is not possible for me to read letters to Śrīla Prabhupāda. I simply inform him of any good news which comes, and so I have told him of your successful town hall meeting as well as your other preaching activities.

These letters were almost as valuable as Śrīla Prabhupāda's, since they were often filled with direct quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

One evening Śrīla Prabhupāda called for all the available sannyāsīs. He said he was feeling tired, but like a father happy to have his children with him, he said, "You should all come to be with me like this, and I feel better."

One day while sitting with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa began to describe the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa as depicted in the painting hanging to the right of Śrīla Prabhupāda's prasādam table. The painting showed Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd friends eating lunch. Śrīla Prabhupāda looked at the painting and then, closing his eyes and thinking of the līlā, said, "This is the highest perfection of life. I have concluded that whatever is done without Kṛṣṇa is simply a waste of time. What will they think of this?"

Prabhupāda's moods moved and varied within the realm of transcendental emotions and attitudes. To some of the disciples attending him, he said, "I am thinking, 'I am a worthless person, taking so much service. There is no way I can repay you. I am poor in every respect, financially and spiritually.' "

“Śrīla Prabhupāda," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa protested, “our only desire is to serve you."

"I know," Prabhupāda replied, “and it is the only reason I am living. All over the world things are going on by your sincere service."

But occasionally Prabhupāda would still reprimand an errant disciple. When, in dressing Prabhupāda, Upendra gave him a luṅgī that was too small, Prabhupāda called him “a fool and a rascal." And when Tamāla Kṛṣṇa did not attend Prabhupāda one morning, due to having a cold, Prabhupāda was critical. “I was never neglectful about my duty in any field of activity," he said, “even business. Dr. Bose loved me very much. He was giving me checks to sign for forty thousand rupees. I was never lazy or neglectful in duty. I would do it honestly and try to make it perfect. Only I was neglectful when I was involved with my young wife. Then I neglected my studies. That was due to circumstances. And then later I neglected my wife. My father said I was fortunate not to like my family. Kṛṣṇa saved me through so many circumstances. This material life is checkered."

Early one morning Śrīla Prabhupāda awoke suddenly. “I had a dream," he said to the devotees attending him. “There was a big assembly of drunkards and chanters. The drunkards were madmen. Some of the drunkards were becoming chanters. They cannot stop fighting. The drunkards were so crazy."

“Were you there also?" asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

“Yes, I was standing there also."

“Were some of the chanters becoming drunkards?"

“Chanters cannot fall down," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “Their names are listed—back to home, back to Godhead. They are in Kṛṣṇa's family."

After the G.B.C. assembly in Vṛndāvana, Svarūpa Dāmodara had traveled to Manipur and Calcutta and was now returning to Vṛndāvana to see Śrīla Prabhupāda. As soon as Prabhupāda heard Svarūpa Dāmodara had arrived he asked to see him. As usual, Śrīla Prabhupāda treated him very specially and gave him much time and attention. From Prabhupāda's first meeting with Svarūpa Dāmodara when Svarūpa Dāmodara had been Thoudam Singh, a Ph.D. candidate in organic chemistry at UCLA, Prabhupāda had taken great care to cultivate their relationship.

Thoudam had grown up in Manipur but after graduating from high school had come to America to continue his education at the University of California. He had been attracted by the devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on the streets of Los Angeles and had visited the temple. When he met Śrīla Prabhupāda, he became convinced that he had met a genuine spiritual leader. At first Thoudam had maintained his stance as a representative of the world of empirical scientific knowledge, and Śrīla Prabhupāda had invited him for morning walks on Venice Beach.

Day after day, Śrīla Prabhupāda would draw Thoudam into arguments about the origin of life. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was ready to argue, he would glance around and ask, “Where is the

scientist?" And on catching sight of Thoudam, he would ask, "So, what do they say?" Thoudam would then argue that life had arisen by chance through chemical evolution, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would smash the argument with a stunning display of logic and common sense.

Thoudam, by regularly associating with Śrīla Prabhupāda and by reading the Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, had become more inclined to Kṛṣṇa consciousness than to material science, and eventually he had become Prabhupāda's initiated disciple, Svarūpa Dāmodara dāsa. With Śrīla Prabhupāda's encouragement, Svarūpa Dāmodara had soon received his Ph.D. and pledged to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda through scientific lectures and writings against the theories of modern, atheistic science.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was well aware of the powerful sway science held over people everywhere, and he was out to combat their godless propaganda. He knew that Bhagavad-gītā was the highest science, and he saw how outrageously prejudiced many modern scientific assumptions were. For all their high technical jargon and faith in the scientific method, the scientists were actually ignorant of the origin and purpose of life.

Svarūpa Dāmodara and a few other devotees holding graduate degrees had formed the Bhaktivedanta Institute and were working within academic circles to establish the scientific basis of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda had been especially pleased when at a large meeting of scientists Svarūpa Dāmodara had challenged a Nobel Prize-winning scientist who held that life was a phenomenon that occurred at a certain level of chemical complexity. "If I give you the required chemicals," Svarūpa Dāmodara had asked him, "will you be able to produce life?" And the embarrassed scientist had replied, "I don't know." Repeatedly Śrīla Prabhupāda had referred to that incident in his conversations and lectures.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often praised the work of Svarūpa Dāmodara and the Bhaktivedanta Institute and assured them that the BBT would provide funds for their printing, research, and building projects. He had given them the arguments, and they were developing them with scientific language.

Now Svarūpa Dāmodara had come for more association with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and after offering obeisances, he presented Śrīla Prabhupāda with several pink lotus flowers. Śrīla Prabhupāda took one in his hand and opened the petals; the others he gave to his secretary for presenting to the Deities. Svarūpa Dāmodara had also brought several ripe pineapples, and Prabhupāda immediately asked for a glass of fresh pineapple juice.

Svarūpa Dāmodara was arranging for a conference of scientists in Vṛndāvana to discuss "The Origin of Life." He had been meeting with various scientists and professors, many of whom had shown interest in Svarūpa Dāmodara's approach and in participating in the conference. Svarūpa Dāmodara read Prabhupāda the prospectus he had prepared announcing the upcoming conference. Prabhupāda listened silently and at the end said, "All glories to Svarūpa Dāmodara!" Later in the afternoon they spoke again. It seemed that Prabhupāda was never too tired or too indisposed to speak with Svarūpa Dāmodara about defeating materialistic science.

Svarūpa Dāmodara was getting hope from his conversations with scientists. He told Prabhupāda, “I think they're interested in the program we are making. Otherwise they wouldn't take time to discuss. Some of them feel our approach is unique.”

“There is no other such proposal,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “They have taken God as something mystical. Especially this rascal Darwin's theory. They have become like animals, and they are seeing everyone as animals. This rascal has convinced them, ‘Your grandfather was a monkey.’ How could they become the son of a monkey? But this is going on. A grand rascal, this Darwin. And his theory is taken as the greatest principle of anthropology in the whole world. So scientists by combined meeting should speak out against this Darwin's theory.”

On the day of Svarūpa Dāmodara's arrival in Vṛndāvana, the first rains also arrived, indicating the end of summer and the start of the monsoons. Heavy rains beat down while Prabhupāda and Svarūpa Dāmodara continued talking. Prabhupāda said that the Vedic evolutionary theory had been presented in the Padma Purāṇa thousands of years before Darwin.

“If we can get some big scientists on our side,” said Svarūpa Dāmodara, “at least a few, that will be enough.”

“That I am asking,” said Prabhupāda.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa figured that Śrīla Prabhupāda would be tired after two hours of talking, so he interrupted, “Would you like a kīrtana party now, Śrīla Prabhupāda?”

But Prabhupāda corrected him. “This is kīrtana now going on. People have to understand what is kīrtana. Any topics on Kṛṣṇa, that is kīrtana. Śukadeva Gosvāmī became perfect by kīrtana, but what kind of kīrtana did he do?”

“He was speaking the Bhāgavatam,” answered Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

“Yes,” said Prabhupāda. “You are simply thinking drums and karatālas is kīrtana. But anything we do here is kīrtana. There is no material connection here. We are not talking how to increase our business and enjoy women and wine. That is not our aim. Ka uttamaśloka-guṇyanuvādāt. We are trying to establish Kṛṣṇa—that is kīrtana. Śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ. Do you know this?”

Taking this remark as his cue, Svarūpa Dāmodara went on to speak about scientists he had met who were interested in the proposed “Origin of Life” conference. “I am thinking of the title of our conference,” he said, “as a Bhaktivedanta Vijñāna Conference in Vṛndāvana.”

“No,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “They will take it otherwise, thinking that Bhaktivedanta is not a jñānī. They will take it lightly because Bhaktivedanta Swami is not a scientist.” One of the devotees said that “Bhaktivedanta” actually indicated the highest science, and Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed. But to understand bhakti, he said, was very difficult for the ordinary man.

“Why not ‘Life Comes From Life?’” asked Prabhupāda. And Svarūpa Dāmodara immediately agreed.

"Make something extraordinary," said Prabhupāda. "We are not just some magicians like the other yogīs. There is money, intelligence, and I can give you inspiration."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's comments often implied that his bodily condition was of no importance, either to himself or to his followers. And this was, in fact, an important instruction regarding the guru's body (vapuḥ) and his instructions (vāṇī). The spiritual master would not always be physically present, but in the form of his instructions he was eternally available for the sincere disciple. And that association was as real and personal as physical association. In fact, the ecstasy of service in separation was greater. The śāstras state that the body of the pure devotee is spiritual but that his physical presence in the material world is temporary. As Śrīla Prabhupāda had said of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, his passing away meant he had gone to serve Kṛṣṇa in another place. Śrīla Prabhupāda had instructed his disciples regarding the body of the spiritual master in his book *The Nectar of Instruction*.

Being situated in his original Kṛṣṇa conscious position, a pure devotee does not identify with the body. Such a devotee should not be seen from a materialistic point of view. Indeed, one should overlook a devotee's having a body born in a low family, a body with a bad complexion, a deformed body, or a diseased or infirm body. According to ordinary vision, such imperfections may seem prominent in the body of a pure devotee, but despite such seeming defects, the body of a pure devotee cannot be polluted. It is exactly like the waters of the Ganges, which sometimes during the rainy season are full of bubbles, foam and mud. The Ganges waters do not become polluted. Those who are advanced in spiritual understanding will bathe in the Ganges without considering the condition of the water.

The devotees working closely with Śrīla Prabhupāda did not think he was deteriorating; no matter how he appeared, he was just giving them another opportunity to serve him. If he wanted to eat or didn't want to eat, if he was pleased or displeased, if he appeared well or ill, they would respond accordingly, out of duty and love. This mood was becoming increasingly prominent as Śrīla Prabhupāda more and more depended on his disciples to help him carry out all his functions. He had said he was remaining in the world only to satisfy his disciples' sincere desires to serve him. Yet he continued to emphasize that their service to his physical form was not as important as their following his instructions.

When two of Prabhupāda's sannyāsīs were taking leave of him, he smiled pleasingly and said, "I may stay or go, but in my books I will live forever." When he heard that forty thousand hardbound books had been distributed in one week, he said, "If book distribution increases, I will never die. I will be living for centuries." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa remarked that the book distribution reports were one kind of news that didn't give Prabhupāda a headache, and Prabhupāda smiled broadly. "No!" he said. "It is my life!"

But one day while sitting in the garden with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Svarūpa Dāmodara, and others, Śrīla Prabhupāda became very disturbed when he detected a mistake in one of his already printed books. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was reading aloud a verse from the First Canto which began, "Munayaḥ sādhu prṣṭo 'ham." Śrīla Prabhupāda had him read the synonyms.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa read: “munayaḥ—O sages; sādhu—this is relevant; prṣṭah—questioned... ”

“Sādhu?” asked Śrīla Prabhupāda. Thus he uncovered a thoughtless mistake made by the Sanskrit editors. Sādhu means “devotee,” not “this is relevant.” Śrīla Prabhupāda became very angry and denounced the “rascal Sanskrit scholars.” “A little learning,” he said “is dangerous. Immediately they think they have become big scholar, thinking, ‘I shall arrange!’ And then they write all nonsense.” He continued speaking about the mistake for half an hour. He was disturbed. He ordered Tamāla Kṛṣṇa to write at once to the BBT and stop these speculations by his disciples—changing his books in the name of editing. The devotees were startled to see Prabhupāda so angry; he was supposed to be peacefully relishing a Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam reading here in his garden. Such a change was very serious, he said, because it changed the meaning. “Even if the authorized ācāryas would make a mistake,” he said, “it would not be changed. This is āṛṣa-prayoga. In this way the ācāryas are honored.”

By Śrīla Prabhupāda's strong reaction to this one printed mistake, he was again stressing the great importance of his books. “Whatever I have wanted to say,” he explained, “I have said in my books. If I live, I will say something little more. If you want to know me, read my books.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was especially pleased by letters he received from Ghanaśyāma, who was distributing books in the Communist countries of Eastern Europe. Ghanaśyāma was a member of the BBT library party, which was systematically traveling from country to country all over the world, placing full sets of Prabhupāda's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta in university libraries. In daring forays into Communist Europe, Ghanaśyāma was meeting with success. On hearing his report, Prabhupāda's demeanor transformed. “My books are the real Communism,” he declared with enthusiasm. “I am writing for the whole human society. My philosophy is to unite human society on the basis of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And that is actually happening. Why is the black man working for me and the white man also? How much potency this boy has. Practically he is preaching in the jungle. The people do not know the language, and still they are giving him standing orders.”

Prabhupāda had said that the only real medicine for him was kīrtana. And kīrtana, he had explained, included preaching around the world. And for Prabhupāda, who was taking so little food, the chanting of the holy name and the kīrtana of preaching reports from his disciples seemed to be not only his medicine but his sustenance as well.

On the evening of the day Prabhupāda received Ghanaśyāma's letter, he learned that Gopāla Kṛṣṇa had arrived with copies of several newly published Hindi books. Prabhupāda had been lying in bed, but on receiving the good news, he raised his eyebrows and said, “Bring them immediately!” Gopāla Kṛṣṇa entered with the books, and Prabhupāda immediately sat up in ecstasy.

Years ago Śrīla Prabhupāda had begun a large gurukula (a Kṛṣṇa conscious primary school) in Dallas, Texas. But when the Texas state government had begun imposing too many restrictions, Prabhupāda advised in 1976 that the boys' gurukula be moved to Vṛndāvana, India.

The school should be moved to our new gurukula project in Vrindavana. The facility will be built just to suit the needs of the brahmacari to develop spiritually. To live in Vrindavana is the highest

perfection, and to grow up in Vrindavana is the greatest fortune. Even to live in Mathura Mandala for a fortnight guarantees one liberation.

In Vrindavana, no one will place restrictions on the school, and it will be encouraged by the government. Thousands will send their children to be trained as human beings and devotees. The atmosphere in Vrindavana is beyond compare, and the Krishna-Balaram Mandir is the finest in the world.

By June 1977, the gurukula building in Vṛndāvana was near completion, and the devotees managing the gurukula were contemplating opening the building in the near future. They were discussing how the rooms should be used, including which rooms would be for staff offices and residences. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda had not been consulted on these details, he seemed to know what was going on, and one morning he told his secretary he would like to see the new building from top to bottom. After taking darśana of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, he was carried in his chair for a tour of the new building.

Pleased with the construction, he remarked, "By Kṛṣṇa's grace everything has been done very nicely." The second floor was one continuous wide veranda with many connecting rooms. "The persons in charge," explained Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "have one room for residence and one for an office."

"Very comfortable," Prabhupāda remarked. He heard and observed everything, occasionally making suggestions—there should be a flower garden and a fountain in the central courtyard. "I think there is no other building equal to this in Vṛndāvana," he said. As they came to the first floor, Akṣayānanda Mahārāja, one of the temple managers, pointed out to Prabhupāda, "I want to keep my office here."

"That's nice," said Prabhupāda. "But because we have got a big enough place now, we should not think, 'I shall keep one leg in one place and one leg in another place,' and then the whole thing is mismanaged. Don't do that. Don't misuse even one inch."

"You were saying you wanted five hundred students," said one of the gurukula teachers. "So we should keep as much space as possible for the students on the floors."

"Yes, yes," said Prabhupāda. This was the point he wanted stressed.

But then another devotee remarked, "We are going to have administrative offices mixing here, both for the temple and the gurukula."

"No," said Prabhupāda, "you have to invite children here. Otherwise what is the use of building such a big building? Not that we have three dozen managers and four students."

Although Prabhupāda's soft voice was sometimes lost amid the noise of construction, and although his comments were made intermittently while being carried from place to place, his message was strong and clear. "Now we have a big facility," he said. "So bring students. That is the first principle."

"We have to get the ISKCON students first," said one of the teachers.

"ISKCON or FISKCON," said Prabhupāda, "bring students." Prabhupāda's word play made the devotees laugh. But he was serious.

"It is a rākṣasa* civilization," said Prabhupāda. And he began mimicking the cry of a typical street vendor: "Do rupyā! do rupyā—and no knowledge. Kṛṣṇa says, tathā dehāntara-praptiḥ, but all they can understand is two rupees, four rupees. Where they will go in the next life they do not understand. They do not understand eternal life, only how to enjoy this life. They don't understand one line of the Gītā, yet they say, 'I read Gītā.' This darkness is going on, and people are kept in darkness in the name of so-called university education. So our gurukula will be successful. It may take time."

After touring the gurukula facility, Prabhupāda had the devotees place his chair down once more before returning to his own rooms. With most of the resident devotees of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir, including gurukula students, gathered around him, Prabhupāda made his emphatic point. "You are thinking of management," he said, "—this manager and that manager and what rooms to utilize. But my question is, 'Who will you manage?' Bring that person. In Bengali there is a superstition that you should not lie with your head toward the northern side. So one man said, 'But I have no head. For me what is the question of keeping it to the northern or the southern side?' So your contemplation about management is like that. First of all, who will you manage? Simply considering office manager and this and that is not good. First thing is bring students. Then it will be successful."

That afternoon Śrīla Prabhupāda said he would speak to the gurukula staff. They gathered in his room, and he instructed them as only he could—he who was empowered to lead the world organization of Lord Caitanya's movement. "Our next business," he began, "is to approach the well-to-do businessmen and tell them, 'Children of your family are expected to be educated with good behavior, good character, and devotion. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, 'What is the use of begetting children like cats and dogs?' They must be learned and follow the bhakti-mārga. We will teach your sons these things.' Canvass like that."

In the present society, he said, even the prime minister's son may be a debauchee. The demon Hiranyakaśipu hadn't wanted his son Prahlaḍa to be a devotee but to be like himself, a cheater and a diplomat; and today's society was comprised of little Hiranyakaśipus. "But our idea is to create Prahlaḍas," Śrīla Prabhupāda continued. "At least 250 students can be accommodated nicely. Throughout India and the whole world you cannot bring 250 students? What kind of managers are you? I say bring five hundred. Canvass like this: 'I fall down at your lotus feet. I flatter you one hundred times. Kindly hear me!' In this way canvass. You have to bring students. Not just rooms for management."

Prabhupāda said that if the gurukula was successful and if ISKCON got more standing in the future, the government could take guidance from ISKCON and not allow people to cheat, claiming to be a brāhmaṇa or kṣatriya without the training "These things are now a dream," Prabhupāda admitted, "but it should be done. I am thinking of so many things. But my life is ending. So keep these ideas. You especially, because you are young men."

* * *

July brought the rainy season to Vṛndāvana. Clouds began building from the beginning of the month, and by mid-July it would be raining daily. The perfumed odor of the kadamba flower was heavy in the air, and after a rain, the nīm blossoms would give off their onionlike aroma. The peacocks, with their full-feathered tails, became ecstatic, dancing, cooing, and calling. Sometimes a sudden rainstorm would come even while Śrīla Prabhupāda was sitting on his bed or at his dictating desk in an unsheltered part of the veranda, and his servants would rush out to move him inside as quickly as possible. Sometimes when rain prevented his using the garden he would recline instead on the little porch overlooking the garden. But at least the 120-degree heat was broken, and the days became more bearable.

Prabhupāda quietly rested and continued his day's routine, waiting to see what Kṛṣṇa desired. He would often wake about six A.M. and open his eyes to see Tamāla Kṛṣṇa at his bedside. He would then extend his hands, indicating that he wanted to sit up in bed. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa or another servant would then lightly stroke Śrīla Prabhupāda's back while Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke his mind.

Very few devotees were visiting Vṛndāvana, and guests were rarely allowed to see Prabhupāda. His health was not improving, nor did it seem to be at a crisis point as it had been in May. But because he was hardly eating anything, he was not building his strength. His main treatment consisted of hearing kīrtana, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and Caitanya-caritāmṛta.

One of the topics which Śrīla Prabhupāda dealt with during these days was the conception of a model universe for a Vedic planetarium. His disciple Ambarīṣa, great-grandson of Henry Ford, had pledged to donate for constructing a gorgeous museum-planetarium in a major city such as Detroit or Washington, D.C. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to present the structure of the universe as it is presented in the Fifth Canto, but so far no one had been able to show how it could be done. The devotees who tried were often baffled in an attempt to reconcile the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's description with the conceptions of modern astronomy. In Bombay, they had brought a so-called Vedic astronomer before Prabhupāda, but he had been unable to make even a simple diagram. Modern scientists give no credence to the Bhāgavatam's account describing the earth as Jambūdvīpa, an island in the middle of concentric oceans and islands. Nor do the scientists find mountains as tall as those described in the Vedic literature. Śrīla Prabhupāda cautioned the devotees, however, not to be guided by their own Western prejudices but to try and understand the universe as described in the Bhāgavatam.

And that was extremely difficult. Śrīla Prabhupāda admitted, "When I wrote this, I thought it will not be possible for me unless somebody else helps me."

"How did you write it?" Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked, and Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Kṛṣṇa helped me. I don't know. [He laughed.] That somebody—Kṛṣṇa—helped."

Inevitably the devotees asked, "But how will we explain it to the scientists?"

"We do not require to satisfy the scientists," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied. "We have to describe according to śāstra. If they can understand it, then they'll understand it. Otherwise, it is not our business to satisfy the so-called scientists. We are dealing with the real description."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested that the planetarium would spell the downfall of Western civilization.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "I want to expose that they are cheating. Their only interest is to make money, and for this they cheat. If you can make this planetarium, it will be a grand success, triumphant."

In early July, some of the devotees in Vṛndāvana were working on sketches of the universe according to the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. They were puzzled, however, about how to account for satellite photos of the earth, which seemed to contradict the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's description. Śrīla Prabhupāda's reply was that the scientists were bound up by their own conditioning and could not go beyond a certain point. When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa reiterated that Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's explanation still didn't agree with modern travel around the earth, Prabhupāda insisted that it did.

"You are prejudiced," he said. "You're conditioned with preconceptions of how everything is. It is just like a bull grinding, going around in a circle. He is tied up and simply going around. So everyone is tied up. They cannot go beyond a point, and they cannot move any way they like, just like the bull."

"They have cheated about going to the moon, so how can we believe them? They want to explain the whole universe, but how can we believe them? Once someone is shown to be a cheater, he will always cheat. A gentleman will say, 'I don't know.' But they are not gentlemen. They are loafer class. How can we believe them? They said the world was flat. Then Galileo said it was round, and for this he was almost hanged. They didn't know, and he didn't know. But our knowledge doesn't change, because it is perfect. As soon as there is change, it is not perfect."

A few days later, the committee of devotees returned to Prabhupāda and said that the question was still unanswered regarding how the Bhāgavatam's description of Jambūdvīpa could accommodate the fact of traveling west from Los Angeles and reaching India. In reply, Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that they not concern themselves now with such a minor issue. And he referred to the Pacific Ocean as "a drop of water." The descriptions in the Bhāgavatam could not be adjusted within the limits of mundane knowledge.

Prabhupāda gave the example of how after returning from Vaiṣṇava, Nārada Muni had told a simple cobbler that Lord Nārāyaṇa was passing an elephant through the eye of a needle. "Oh, Nārāyaṇa is so great!" the cobbler had said. But an educated brāhmaṇa had said, "It is simply stories."

Nārada had then asked the cobbler, "How can you believe that Nārāyaṇa was passing an elephant through the eye of a needle?" "Why not," the cobbler had said. "I am sitting under a banyan tree. There are so many fruits, and each fruit contains so many seeds, which will each grow into a big banyan tree."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that with experimental logic one cannot understand the inconceivable. "Everything is inconceivable," he said, "and these rascals want to bring it as conceivable. Don't be puffed up by your so-called education. It has no value."

One day, while Śrīla Prabhupāda was sitting in the garden hearing some news from his secretary, several monkeys appeared on top of the high wall and looked down at the devotees. Śrīla Prabhupāda had often asked the devotees to chase them, and once he had even asked that a monkey doll be hanged by the neck from a tree to frighten the others. But still the monkeys came. Sometimes the sight of a monkey prompted Śrīla Prabhupāda to remark about Darwin. One time he talked about how Kṛṣṇa dealt with the monkeys as friends, giving them butter and playing with them in the forest. As he talked, small chipmunks would run along the top of the wall, and occasionally a pair of green parrots would swoop into the yard, chirping loudly and flittering within the branches of a bush and then flying upwards into the sky above the garden.

Suddenly a large peacock alighted nearby and spread his gorgeous purple, blue, and green feathers, as if posing for the pleasure of the devotees. While a brahmācārī continued steadily fanning him, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat silently. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, however, had some business which he thought would not be too demanding for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Sitting at his spiritual master's feet, he broached an important topic.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," he began, "we are receiving a number of letters now from people who want to get initiated. So up until now, since you were becoming ill, we asked them to wait." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested that since the guru has to take on the karma of his disciples, and since Śrīla Prabhupāda's health was already weak, he should wait before accepting more disciples.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said nothing, and the Vṛndāvana peace was punctuated by the splashing of the fountain. Then he began to speak. He named three of his disciples and said, "So these three can do."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked if devotees in America should write directly to these men for initiation.

"Nearby," said Prabhupāda, and he named three more disciples, leading devotees in Europe. "Five, six men may divide," said Prabhupāda. "Whoever is nearest."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked whether this would apply to both first and second initiations. Prabhupāda said yes.

"So there is no need for devotees to write to you for first and second initiation," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "They can write to the man nearest them. But all these persons are still your disciples. Anybody who would give initiation is doing so on your behalf."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked if there was anyone in India that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to do this, and Śrīla Prabhupāda added another name. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked to hear the names he had given, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa recited seven names.

"That's all, " said Prabhupāda. "Now you distribute. For the time being, seven names." Then he added two more. "So without waiting for me," said Prabhupāda, "whoever you consider deserves. That will depend on discretion."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said nothing else, and after a few minutes Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked if Prabhupāda would like to hear a kīrtana. Śrīla Prabhupāda assented by a slight gesture, and the chanters, who had been waiting, came to join him.

The next morning Śrīla Prabhupāda added two more names, making a total of eleven disciples who would act as ṛtvik, or representatives of the ācārya. Śrīla Prabhupāda had not liked the idea of newcomers to ISKCON having to wait unnecessarily long to be initiated. Now initiations could continue regularly at the discretion of his eleven selected men.

July 10

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa received a phone call from Gopāla Kṛṣṇa. The Māyāpur temple had been attacked by a gang of three hundred dacoits (hoodlums). Five devotees were wounded and in the hospital. Bhavānanda Goswami had fired a shotgun at the attackers, injuring two. The police, who didn't arrive until two hours after being called, had arrested Bhavānanda and put him in jail. Śrīla Prabhupāda became disturbed. "If the dacoits attacked and we used our shotgun," he said, "what is wrong?"

Later that day Prabhupāda heard The Hindustan Times' version of the attack. According to the news report, some cows had wandered onto the ISKCON property, and the devotees had beaten the cows. This had angered the villagers, who on coming to the temple to complain had been shot at. Two had been injured. The article named Bhavānanda Goswami and at the end mentioned that the founder of the temple, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, had not been present.

Śrīla Prabhupāda heard the article, made a few comments, and went on with his afternoon's writing and translating as usual. But late that afternoon he called for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "I am afraid of a big conspiracy," he said. "The last line of the article says that the founder-ācārya was not present. They were sorry. They would have arrested me and put me in jail."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa scoffed that the news article was one-sided. "That doesn't sound right," he said, "that the Devotees beat the cows. Devotees don't beat cows."

Within a few days, a letter came from Gopāla Kṛṣṇa giving the facts of the Māyāpur incident. About fifty Muslim men were stealing crops from the ISKCON land. When Nitāi-cānda tried to stop them, they attacked him, cutting his head in three places. Later, while he was being treated in the temple infirmary, the men came and beat Nitāi-cānda and stripped one of the ladies naked. Meanwhile, another 250 men attacked, breaking the gates, cutting phone and electric wires, and destroying the water pumps. Wanting to scare the mob, Bhavānanda had fired a shot in the air, but when they did not disperse he fired another shot, injuring two men.

In the meantime, the attackers had broken both hands of one of the gurukula teachers and beaten many other devotees. Two hours later the police arrived and recommended the devotees go to Krishnanagar police station—twenty miles away—to file a complaint. When the devotees had reached the station, they had been arrested, and the two seriously injured devotees were denied medical treatment. Bhavānanda Goswami was still in jail. Prabhupāda said it was a plot to drive away the Hare Kṛṣṇa men. “They want that all Bengal be completely godless,” he said.

When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested that this incident would hurt their village preaching, Prabhupāda replied, “No, it will be to our favor very soon. I think the central government will take action. This is the same as Kamsa against Kṛṣṇa—Kṛṣṇa must win. No one can defeat Kṛṣṇa. If I had been there, they would have charged that I ordered the shooting and arrested me. Now I am an old man, I cannot take an active stand. So you all must do everything carefully.”

Prabhupāda continued to think and comment on the incident. “The guṇḍā class* doesn't like Caitanya Mahāprabhu,” he said. “They say Caitanya Mahāprabhu made people emasculated. In Orissa they say that after Mahārāja Prataparudra met Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he lost his kṣatriya strength. He was a very powerful king, but after he met Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he became effeminate.”

“What is our reply to that?” asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

“What can you reply?” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “If they conclude something like that, they have no idea of spiritual life. They say this is disruptive, Lord Caitanya's saying, *na dhanam na janam*. We don't want such things, and they want them. So how can you reply to such people? Everyone wants this, and we say that we don't want it. How can you make a compromise with such people? In your country also they say, “What is wrong with illicit sex? What is wrong with intoxication?” They say we are brainwashing. Is it not? It is very difficult to push on this movement. Still we are doing. That is Kṛṣṇa's grace.”

Seeing that Śrīla Prabhupāda was disturbed, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested, “Will you try to translate this afternoon, Śrīla Prabhupāda?”

But Prabhupāda continued on the same point. “A young, beautiful woman comes at the dead of night to see Haridāsa Ṭhākura, to offer her body, and he denied. Who will appreciate this?”

“We appreciate,” said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

“You appreciate,” said Prabhupāda, “but in the modern world, who will appreciate?” Prabhupāda continued pointing out the irrevocable split between the devotees and the nondevotees: “Their idea is that a young man cannot live without a young woman, and yet Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, “Oh, you are after a young woman? That is more dangerous than drinking poison!” ”

As Prabhupāda spoke of the Māyāpur devotees who had been willing to sacrifice their lives for Kṛṣṇa, he became choked with emotion and began to cry. “Kṛṣṇa will give them protection,” he said, “our Māyāpur men.” He mentioned how Haridāsa Ṭhākura had also been put into jail and beaten and how Prahlāda Mahārāja had been tortured, until Lord Nṛsiṃha had appeared. “Don't be

worried," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, crying, and speaking as if all his Māyāpur devotees were directly in front of him. "Kṛṣṇa will protect you. We are doing our best as far as our intelligence goes. Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted that in every nook and corner of the world this movement should be pushed. We are limited."

In an attempt to ease Prabhupāda's sorrow, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa started reading the latest report from Ghanaśyāma, who was distributing books in Eastern Europe. The report of extraordinary success drew Prabhupāda's attention away from Māyāpur. He smiled and said, "That is dynamic."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa continued reading the report.

Everywhere we go people either know about you or they are very eager to find out about Kṛṣṇa and yourself by reading your books. Anyone who has distributed your books in the Communist countries will support my claim that nowhere in the world are people more appreciative of your books.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa looked up from the letter and commented, "He has been everywhere, Prabhupāda, and he says that your books are more appreciated in the Communist countries than anywhere else in the world."

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "they are hungry."

A few days later a full, on-the-scene report came in the mail from Jayapatāka Swami in Māyāpur. The local Hindus of Māyāpur were outraged at what had happened and were mobilizing mass petitions in support of the ISKCON temple. Although the newspaper reports were false, gradually people were learning the facts. Jayapatāka reported vivid details of Bhavānanda and other devotees being marched through Navadvīpa in chains on their way to court and the people of Navadvīpa offering them respects. The devotees were still in jail, he said, constantly chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

On the whole, the report was optimistic. Prasādam distribution was continuing in Māyāpur, book distribution in West Bengal was increasing, and the preaching parties were well received wherever they went. Śrīla Prabhupāda's prediction was coming true: the incident was turning in the devotees' favor. He commented that the enemies had thought they were digging up a garden snake by attacking Kṛṣṇa's devotees, but they were finding that they had in fact unearthed a cobra.

July was a good month for Śrīla Prabhupāda's work on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He continued dictating very early in the morning and in the afternoon, completing chapters Eight and Nine of the Tenth Canto. It was his great pleasure to do so. Working on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, he was completely transcendental to his physical condition, despite the accompanying heart palpitations and despite his faint voice and general weakness. Even to sit was difficult, and yet once he began working, nothing could stop him.

Speaking into the hand microphone of his dictating machine, oblivious to his bodily condition, Prabhupāda described patiently and methodically how Nanda Mahārāja's family priest, Gargamuni, performed the name-giving ceremony for baby Kṛṣṇa. In his purports, Śrīla Prabhupāda often spoke from his personal experiences and realizations.

This is the mission of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and devotees also have the same mission. One who executes this mission of para-upakāra, performing welfare activities for people in general, is recognized by Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as being very, very dear to Him (na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priya kṛttamaḥ). Similarly, Caitanya Mahāprabhu has advised this para-upakāra, and He has especially instructed the inhabitants of India. On the whole, the duty of a pure Vaiṣṇava devotee is to act for the welfare of others.

Sometimes sitting in the predawn open air on the second-floor veranda and sometimes in the humid heat of bright afternoon, Śrīla Prabhupāda worked, describing the limitless Vedic knowledge, just as his predecessors, the Gosvāmīs and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, had done when worshiping Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya while living in Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, was the first great ācārya to make Kṛṣṇa conscious literature available to persons of all countries throughout the world, regardless of birth status or previous character. Even as he composed the latest chapters of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, thousands of young men and women were working on his behalf to preach the Vedic message to the world. His disciples were, in fact, keenly aware of how Śrīla Prabhupāda was producing the Tenth Canto purports in Vṛndāvana, and they prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa that he be allowed to continue for many years, so that he could complete the entire Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

In explaining the infant pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda described an entirely transcendental mode of consciousness, beyond material designations of babyhood or old age.

All these pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, and the great enjoyment exhibited by the mothers, are transcendental; nothing about them is material. They are described in Brahma-saṁhitā as ānanda-cinmaya-rasa. In the spiritual world there is anxiety, there is crying, and there are other feelings similar to those of the material world, but because the reality of these feelings is in the transcendental world, of which this world is only an imitation, mother Yaśodā and Rohinī enjoyed them transcendently.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was now rendering a particularly sweet part of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and with relish he described Kṛṣṇa's stealing butter and feeding it to the monkeys and His showing the universal form to mother Yaśodā. In describing how the vision of Kṛṣṇa's universal form was beyond mother Yaśodā's comprehension, Śrīla Prabhupāda shed light on all incomprehensible situations—including his own.

She [mother Yaśodā] could do nothing but offer obeisances to the Lord. One should not try to understand the supreme cause by argument or reasoning. When we are beset by some problem for which we can find no reason, there is no alternative than to surrender to the Supreme Lord and offer Him our respectful obeisances. Then our position will be secure. This was the means adopted in this instance also by mother Yaśodā. Whatever happens, the original cause is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When the immediate cause cannot be ascertained, let us simply offer our obeisances at the lotus feet of the Lord. Mother Yaśodā concluded that the wonderful things she saw in the mouth of her child were due to Him, although she could not clearly ascertain the cause.

Śrīla Prabhupāda made deep and joyful appreciations of the pure devotion of mother Yaśodā for baby Kṛṣṇa, and he described her as the emblem of all pure devotees of the Lord, especially the

residents of Vṛndāvana, who love the Lord in spontaneous affection. "The pure devotees who inhabit Vṛndāvana," he wrote, "do not possess any bodily conception." Such pure devotees were fully dedicated to the service of the Lord in sublime affection, prema. This had been described by Lord Caitanya, he said, as the highest perfection of life, pure love in relationship with Kṛṣṇa. "And mother Yaśodā," Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "appears to be the topmost of all the devotees to have attained this perfection."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was concerned that what he wrote be published and distributed; it was his service to his Guru Mahārāja. And he received great satisfaction in hearing that book distribution was still expanding all over the world. Harikeśa Swami, the G.B.C. of northern and Eastern Europe, reported that he was printing a very large quantity of books in thirteen languages. After hearing only the beginning of this report, Śrīla Prabhupāda exclaimed, "All the blessings of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja on you! You are the most important grandson of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Go on doing like this."

In a similar mood, Śrīla Prabhupāda pushed his G.B.C. secretary for India, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, to produce Hindi books faster and in greater quantities. Whenever Gopāla Kṛṣṇa came to visit Śrīla Prabhupāda without a new publication, Prabhupāda would reprimand him for his slowness. Gopāla Kṛṣṇa therefore began a policy of visiting Prabhupāda only when he had a new book to present. In mid-July, when Gopāla Kṛṣṇa brought a copy of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, First Canto, Part Two, in Hindi, Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted it happily and said, "Twice now unless he brings some book he won't come, because every time I criticize him: 'Where is the book? Where is the book?'"

July 20

Abhirāma arrived and reported to Śrīla Prabhupāda about Māyāpur. There was nothing new in his report. Later, Śrīla Prabhupāda inquired from Tamāla Kṛṣṇa why Abhirāma had come. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa explained that Abhirāma had decided to take up business but was undecided which city to work in—perhaps Bangalore or Bombay.

Later, after Śrīla Prabhupāda had retired for the night and was laying in bed under his mosquito net, he again called for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda was concerned that Abhirāma not drift away from the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement on the plea of looking for business. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he himself had lived independently in gr̥hastha life and so had Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. "But our aim was different," he said. "When these neophytes remain aloof from the temple connection, without attending the functions, gradually they will be lost."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa replied that for that very reason he had suggested to Abhirāma that he make his business in Bombay. "Actually," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "I find the gr̥hasthas have no desire to live independent of the temples." He explained that in the Bombay temple the gr̥hasthas could get apartments near enough to the temple so that they could attend the maṅgala-ārati and other functions.

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Unless these things are continued, the karmīs' poison will spoil them. He can do independent business. There is no harm. But he must be connected with

devotional service." Śrīla Prabhupāda had not moved his body while talking, but he had turned his head slightly. Now he laid his head on the pillow.

"Just like Abhirāma constructed that house," Prabhupāda continued. "That's all right. It is within the campus. There is no harm. But if now he goes away after so much training and advancement, if they are lost, then that's a great loss for the society. With great difficulty we make one Vaiṣṇava. And again if he goes, like Śyāmasundara, then it is a great loss. The whole idea is to give up attachment for the material world and increase attachment for Kṛṣṇa. That is perfection. Now according to one's position, it can be done gradually. But this is the aim."

Śrīla Prabhupāda told Abhirāma that by doing a business in Bombay, he could benefit by living near the temple. "Gṛhasthas should not be dependent on the society," he said. "At the same time they should not be independent of the society." Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed at the apparent contradiction. "This is the position," he said. "Our society cannot take charge of a family. There will be so many numbers of families. How we will support? At the same time, if they remain independent of the society, without touch, then the karmīs' poison will infect them." Śrīla Prabhupāda concluded that the solution for the gṛhastha was either to get an apartment near the temple or to live in the temple, if possible. "They should not live completely independent," he said. "That will be future danger."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said he wanted ideal Kṛṣṇa conscious gṛhasthas. "Just like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura," he said. "There are many. I was gṛhastha also. There was Deity worship, everything nice. I was publishing Back to Godhead as gṛhastha. So the aim of Kṛṣṇa consciousness was there. I could not leave family life because of certain circumstances. That is a different thing. But I must be in touch with devotional service as in the temple. If you live nearby the temple, it is easier. Or in the temple. But if he remains aloof, that is dangerous."

When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa brought up some problematic details of gṛhasthas living in the temple buildings, Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed to his main point and said, "Anyway, these things have to be adjusted. You cannot follow very rigidly in the case of gṛhasthas. Somehow you have to adjust. We cannot allow them to be lost." Prabhupāda saw with alarm that after much training, a gṛhastha couple could be lost simply because they disassociated themselves from the temple. It would be a great loss, and in an attempt to avoid it, he was instructing one of his G.B.C. representatives. Prabhupāda said unless this danger was curbed, "then the future of our society becomes hopeless."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's servant Upendra was also present, and he asked Prabhupāda about a man's responsibility to maintain his wife and family. A man should not marry, said Prabhupāda, unless he had the power of maintaining his family. He should not expect the temple to. "Why should we maintain a gṛhastha?" said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "And where is the means? But these things are all to be adjusted. I can give you the idea." Then Prabhupāda gave the example that if a gṛhastha was maintaining the Deity worship gorgeously in the temple, that was also preaching, and the temple could consider maintaining such a man's family.

"So the guiding principle," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "should be that under no circumstances should anyone become lost."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "Or else, where is the preaching? It will be like Alexander the Great. He was conquering, but as soon as he went to conquer a new place, the last place was lost. Suppose I have conquered Bombay. Then I go to Karachi, but in the meantime Bombay is lost. That was being done by Alexander the Great. When there is no proper management... Just like the British Empire was lost in that way. They could not manage."

"So similarly we should not expand too quickly," suggested Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "unless we have the proper management."

"I am therefore stressing book selling," said Prabhupāda. He wanted to impress upon his leaders the main outlines of his program, and it should be their duty to carry these programs out. "At least don't make me Alexander the Great in my lifetime," he laughed. "They say to me, 'You are great, great, great.' But don't make it small while I am living."

"Or after," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "We'll never make you that way. We should never do that."

"Then," said Prabhupāda, "that's my request. People recognize I am great. Don't make me small. I'll not give you much trouble, but I am now invalid. What can I do?"

"It seems like even if you are invalid," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "it gives us more opportunity to serve you."

"Thank you," said Prabhupāda. "What can I do?" He laughed softly and said, "I have to give you that opportunity."

"It seems that it is your mercy to us," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"All right. Go on," said Prabhupāda, dismissing them.

"Jai, Prabhupāda. Thank you for all your merciful instructions."

July 22

In the morning, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa told Prabhupāda that on the following day Lord Jagannātha would travel down Fifth Avenue in New York City. "Lord Jagannātha is very kind to the mlecchas," Prabhupāda said. "Oriyans are mostly mlecchas, but still they are made pūjārīs. One devotee criticized an Oriyan, and Lord Caitanya slapped him: 'Why do you criticize My servants?' Just see His kindness! I prayed to Kṛṣṇa, 'Anyone who has given a little service, please bless him.' And Kṛṣṇa actually does. He doesn't forget any service done."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa inquired, "Doesn't Rādhārāṇī also pray like that to Kṛṣṇa?"

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "Rādhārāṇī says, 'I am not sincere. Here is Your real servant.' That is mahā-bhāva. Kṛṣṇa becomes a servant to His servant. Therefore a disciple's first duty is to be submissive to his guru."

“Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, “all your devotees are very much grateful to you."

Śrīla Prabhupāda suddenly became immersed in thoughts of his devotees, and he became very ecstatic. Closing his eyes and rocking his head, he spoke with a choked voice and tears. “Oh, your intense love for me. I am living for you. All over the world everything is going on—money is coming and being spent—and I don't have to worry. I am so much indebted. And I am taking so much service from you all."

“It is we who are indebted," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. “There is no way we can ever pay this debt to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

“That is a br̥hat-mṛdaṅga," said Prabhupāda. “I am beating from this room, and the sound goes ten thousand miles away. Our enemies are surprised: “How this man is still going on?' "

Śrīla Prabhupāda went on appreciating how people in so many cities were enjoying the Ratha-yātrā festivals, seeing Lord Jagannātha, and dancing and chanting. He remembered past Ratha-yātrās, such as in 1969 in San Francisco, when some of the devotees were dancing joyously around a tree. He began recalling many other past wonderful experiences in ISKCON.

Toward the end of July, Prabhupāda's health seemed to be worsening again. And again he mentioned that the end might come at any moment.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had been acting as Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal secretary for six continuous months, and he had become Prabhupāda's eyes and ears and his spokesman, especially in dealing with ISKCON management. And he had also become a personal confidant, assisting Śrīla Prabhupāda in his transcendental moods. As a sincere servant, he now began suggesting a different remedy. Śrīla Prabhupāda had recently been feeling and expressing intense devotion toward his disciples in their preaching. Taking this as a cue, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested that if Prabhupāda could travel to the West and be with his disciples there, he would find new life.

“But if I die," said Prabhupāda, “I want to do so in Vṛndāvana." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa replied that Śrīla Prabhupāda should not think of dying. If he would go on a tour of the West, see the devotees there, take prasādam made from food grown on the ISKCON farms, then certainly he would respond to such devotion and regain his appetite and strength. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa pointed out that when Śrīla Prabhupāda had been feeling like this in May and the G.B.C. had come, he had responded to their reciprocation of love by increasing his own desire to live.

“One thing you can do," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “In your daily routine, you can pray to Kṛṣṇa, “If You want him to stay, please cure him, and if not, please take him away. We are fully surrendered to You. Now it depends on Your desire to keep him alive or let him leave this world.' "

Śrīla Prabhupāda was pointing out that he was not a victim of some mundane moroseness robbing him of a will to live. He had already said that he would be with Kṛṣṇa in any case. Staying in this world or leaving it was not up to him, but up to Kṛṣṇa. He recited the prayer of King Kulaśekhara from the Mukunda-mālā-stotra: “My dear Kṛṣṇa, please let me die immediately so that the swan of

my mind can be encircled by the stem of Your lotus feet. Now while I am still strong. Otherwise, at the time of my final breath, when my throat is choked up, how will it be possible to think of You?"

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa persisted in his affectionate line, however, insisting that Śrīla Prabhupāda could not think of leaving. There was so much unfinished business for Prabhupāda in this world, such as personally seeing to the installation of the Deities of Rādhā-Rāsavihārī in the Bombay-temple.

Śrīla Prabhupāda admitted it was so and added, "Another ambition I have is that the populace is suffering from agnosticism. The rascals are suffering, but they do not know why. I want to drive away agnosticism from the world." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa assured Śrīla Prabhupāda that if he were to go to the West, agnosticism would be driven out. The devotees were already working hard on Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction. But if they could have his physical presence, they would increase their preaching unlimitedly. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa no longer kept himself only in a passive role, waiting for the spiritual master to ring the bell and then waiting to hear what he wanted. Now he was trying to persuade Śrīla Prabhupāda to travel, and as Prabhupāda began to consider it, he became enthusiastic.

"When I am in Vṛndāvana," said Prabhupāda, "it is transcendental. That much mercy Kṛṣṇa has shown me. And wherever there is our center, that is also Vaikuṇṭha—New York, Los Angeles, Paris, or London."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa offered an itinerary: a visit to London, staying at the Bhaktivedanta Manor, and also seeing Rādhā-London-īśvara; then to New York and seeing the devotees in the ISKCON skyscraper with Rādhā-Govinda; then to the farm in Pennsylvania; and then Los Angeles, where he could see the new dioramas of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

"To remain in Vṛndāvana is a sentiment," Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed. "In New York if I die you will have to entomb me on the roof," he joked grimly. "There is no other room. If I die, as long as I die among you, you are all Vaikuṇṭha men. I had a dream that Vaikuṇṭha men came to take me. They were all white men with shaven heads. Your countrymen cannot believe how you have changed."

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that they should consult an astrologer to see whether it was auspicious for him to travel and whether he would be cured and how long he would live. "I was born in the evening at four P.M.," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "It was Nandotsava. You can consult an old Pañjikā to see the day. It was a Tuesday. I am prepared to go to the West."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa then quoted from the Bhagavad-gītā, Chapter Two, verse 37, where Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to fight: "Either you will die and achieve the heavenly planets or conquer and enjoy the earthly kingdom." Śrīla Prabhupāda said the verse was appropriate. Throughout the night and the next day he considered the traveling proposal and mentioned to his other servants, "Tamāla is arranging a big party."

"I was praying to Kṛṣṇa, 'What is this slow death?' " Prabhupāda told Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "Then you quoted that verse. At least my disciples will know I came at the risk of my life. They are the future hope. I must enthuse them. Kṛṣṇa ordered Arjuna, and I am Arjuna's servant. I am not so limited to think that this is my country. Everything is Kṛṣṇa's. Why should I limit Kṛṣṇa?"

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa gave encouragement: “When you get there, with so many devotees who are giving their lives for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness and assisting you, it will really be enthralling. And you won't have to speak so much. It's your presence—your seeing the devotees and them seeing you. So in that sense, it won't be exhausting. It's a good climate now, too—August—in London. It's a very good time.”

Prabhupāda turned to Upendra and said, “His words are making me feel different. Just hearing, I become enthusiastic.”

“Śrīla Prabhupāda,” said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, “by going West I know you will recover.”

“May Kṛṣṇa fulfill your words,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. He spent the rest of that afternoon hearing Caitanya-caritāmṛta readings from various devotees. At one point he began to express great bliss and said, “Read Caitanya-caritāmṛta always to me! These three books.* There is no comparison in the world. I may boast like this. I am fortunate to be able to present these books throughout the world, and people are accepting them even blindly.”

After a day had passed, Śrīla Prabhupāda considered the travel proposal more seriously and mentioned some of its defects. He said that wherever he went, his physical condition would go with him.

“But here you have not been translating lately,” said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

“Who says I shall never again translate?” Prabhupāda countered. “Every action has some relaxation and then activity again.” Prabhupāda said that according to allopathic medicine, the only hope for him was to enter a hospital and undergo intensive medical treatment. According to Āyur Vedic medicine, however, there were specific medicines. As Prabhupāda sat on his balcony speaking with his secretary, he wore sunglasses. He would wear them even late in the day or in a darkened room. To his disciples, this was another source of worry—that he appeared to be having problems seeing. Such things made the prospects of traveling to the West seem doubtful. Why couldn't he just stay in Vṛndāvana, some of the devotees reasoned, where everything was arranged for his convenience?

The devotees had sent messages to three astrologers, and all the reports returned that same afternoon. Some of the reports offered absurd remedies without knowledge of Śrīla Prabhupāda's position, but all of them agreed on one point: the next two months would be the most difficult of Prabhupāda's life, and traveling should be avoided. One astrologer recommended Śrīla Prabhupāda wear a blue sapphire.

“So it is not hopeless,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said, after hearing all the reports. “At least for the next five weeks, keep me very carefully. For the time being, no travel. Secure this blue sapphire, and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

On the last day of July, the governor of Tamil Nadu, Sri Prabhudas Patwari, who was visiting Vṛndāvana, paid a short visit to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The governor could only stay half an hour, but Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke energetically with him the entire time. When Śrīla Prabhupāda explained

his condition of health, the governor at once invited Śrīla Prabhupāda to come to Madras and stay at the Raj Bhavan (governor's mansion), where he said the best doctors in the whole of South Asia were available. But Prabhupāda, rather than prolong the discussion about his body, used his bodily condition as an example to preach the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"After all," he said, "so long we have got this body, then janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi [birth, death, old age, and disease] we have to accept. This is the statement of Bhagavad-gītā. So the human endeavor should be to stop this repetition of birth and death. When Viśvāmitra Mahārāja went to see King Daśaratha, the king inquired, punar-janma-jayāya: "You are a great saintly person trying to conquer over birth and death. Is your process going on nicely?" "

Prabhupāda then used the example of his bodily condition in a different way, to illustrate the concept of varṇāśrama-dharma. He compared the brāhmaṇas to the head, the kṣatriyas to the arms, the vaiśyas to the belly, and the śūdras to the legs. "If they are all in good condition, then the health is all right," said Prabhupāda. "Now at the present moment I am suffering because my belly department is not working. So we cannot neglect any department. There must be all departments, and they must be cooperative and healthy. This movement is meant for that purpose. It is the duty of government to give us protection."

Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned the devotees' recent difficulties in Māyāpur and asked for protection. "We'll do it no doubt," Governor Patwari replied. "I'm meeting the prime minister tomorrow, and we are going to discuss that matter." The governor acknowledged that the reports in the newspaper were distorted. He asserted that Madras had a good atmosphere for religious work, and he mentioned several svāmīs who were doing good work. Of one he said, "He is making good propaganda about Gītā everywhere."

"There are many persons making propaganda," said Prabhupāda frankly. "But if you don't mind my saying so, all these men are in ignorance of what is the real meaning of Gītā." Bhagavad-gītā, he said, should be understood as it is, and it should be adopted especially by the rājārṣis, or government leaders.

Again the governor said how nice it would be if Prabhupāda would come to Madras. Prabhupāda seemed to consider it seriously and thanked the governor. Finally, Prabhupāda requested help in getting the permanent residency in India for some of his disciples. "They will never do any harm," he said. "They will never take part in politics."

"I know it," said the governor. "I know it."

"So kindly try to help," said Prabhupāda.

Later, when Prabhupāda mentioned he was fifty-percent decided to go to Madras, he and his servants began discussing the merits of travel to Madras and other places in the world. Although he could not move even a few feet without assistance, if Kṛṣṇa desired he was willing to travel.

July of 1977 was special for pious Hindus, and the people of Vṛndāvana spent extra time in reading scriptures and visiting holy places. So by the end of July, when the trees and bushes were freshening with green leaves, pilgrims came in crowds to Vṛndāvana and to the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Despite the mud and the rain, many of the people were in a jubilant mood, relieved from the oppressive heat and anticipating Jhulana-yātrā, the swing festival of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Jhulana-yātrā was Vṛndāvana's biggest festival and would occur in mid-August this year.

The local newspapers were giving reports on Śrīla Prabhupāda's health, and a genuine concern for his well-being prevailed throughout Vṛndāvana and surrounding villages. Therefore, because of the festival season as well as out of concern for Śrīla Prabhupāda, many people were coming to the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Those who came around nine A.M. got to see Śrīla Prabhupāda when he went for his morning darśana of the Deities.

Śrīla Prabhupāda still had no appetite and had scarcely eaten during the past six weeks. He was no longer regular in his times for sleeping, taking massage, or sitting up and translating. Feeling himself to be at a critical period, he had given permission for the devotees all over ISKCON to recite a simple prayer: "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You desire, please cure Śrīla Prabhupāda." He would regularly go before the Deities each morning. Wearing his dark sunglasses and sitting erect in the rocking chair, he would hold his palms together in a gesture of prayer, while two men, one in front and one behind, carefully carried the rocker from Prabhupāda's room into the temple room. They would set the chair down first before the Deities of Gaura-Nitāi, then before Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and then before Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. Then they would carry him to a central spot in the courtyard, under the tamāla tree, and set his chair down on the black and white checkered marble floor.

Śrīla Prabhupāda would sit facing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and the devotees would sit down around him and begin a kīrtana. As the kīrtana began, two gurukula boys would rise and come in front of him, where they would begin dancing with arms upraised, their cotton cāḍars swinging back and forth. Prabhupāda would usually not speak or even smile, but after a few minutes would give his garlands to a devotee, who would place them around the necks of the dancers. Soon two other young boys would come forward, and the first boys would garland them with the garlands they had received from Śrīla Prabhupāda and sit down. For half an hour, the dancing and singing continued. Guests to the temple would gather, many of them offering money at Prabhupāda's feet, which rested on an embroidered silk cushion.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was gaining resolve to go to the West. One of the astrologers had said that by the fourth of September, after checking with a physician, Śrīla Prabhupāda could undertake travel—but for health only. "I will go there to our Pennsylvania farm," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he appeared hopeful. He didn't consider the astrologers absolute guides; he had consulted them more out of curiosity. Astrology was part of the Vedic knowledge, but the modern-day practitioners were often dubious. When Abhirāma came from Delhi with a report from a new astrologer, Śrīla Prabhupāda heard it, while continuing to chant intently and silently on his beads.

"His main point, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Abhirāma, "was that for six months there is trouble, especially in the first week of September and then again on certain dates in October and November. The longevity is eighty-two years, five months, and eleven days, which means February 28, 1978. This is according to birth and stars arrangement. But he made it very clear that due to the hand of

Kṛṣṇa this could be changed. And if you can pass through 1978, then he sees four or five years ahead clear."

When the report was finished, Śrīla Prabhupāda was quiet for a few minutes and then said, "By calculation the age is finished. That doesn't matter. Rather, if I am finished now, it will be glorious."

"Living will also be glorious," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Let us see as Kṛṣṇa desires." Other horoscopes also showed an inauspicious time ahead, due to the entry of Saturn into the eighth house. Śrīla Prabhupāda took this to indicate that his condition was most critical. In either case—whether according to the stars or according to Kṛṣṇa—who could change destiny? Everything was in Kṛṣṇa's hands. But Śrīla Prabhupāda was still inclined to tour the West. "If I can work a little more," he said, "our society will be very strong. I want to see that what I have done is made still stronger."

Prabhupāda's talk of travel, however, coincided with increasing weakness. He talked less. When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa tried to encourage him to translate, he replied, "When I get inspiration, I will take it up. Don't try to force me. I am going through a difficult time and am now feeling restless. It is not mechanical."

The Jhulana-yātrā pilgrims were mostly villagers. Many were from Rajasthan, the men and women wearing bright colored clothes and the women wearing heavy gold and silver bangles and bracelets, which clanked as they walked barefoot on the roads. The numbers of mendicant sādhus also increased, and they became a common sight, with their ash or clay covered bodies marked with brightly colored tilaka. The Yamunā had flooded in many places and was too swift for bathing or swimming. Thousands of visitors came to the Krishna-Balaram Mandir, which was now one of the most popular temples in all of Northern India. The evening āratī at Krishna-Balaram was so crowded that resident devotees couldn't attend but could only stand in the back of the courtyard at the edge of a packed, jostling crowd. Some of the gurukula boys would greet the guests with Hindi Back to Godhead magazines, each boy selling two or three hundred magazines a night. Śrīla Prabhupāda was glad to hear this.

A few of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples from the West also arrived just to be with him, hoping to render some menial service. When Prabhupāda received them in his dark, cool quarters, he was sitting up on his bed. One of the arrivals, Madhudviṣa, had left Kṛṣṇa consciousness for more than a year but now came before Prabhupāda shaven-headed and wearing Vaiṣṇava tilaka. "Don't leave us," said Prabhupāda feelingly. "You can stay as grhastha, but don't leave us."

To Satsvarūpa, Prabhupāda said, "I like your magazine [Back to Godhead], especially the article 'Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out.' "

Śrutakīrti, who had come from Hawaii, showed Prabhupāda some candles they were producing and selling, and Prabhupāda laughed. "You Westerners," he said. "There is no scarcity of money. But now I have taught you how to spend it." For more than half an hour, Prabhupāda went on talking pleasantly.

Later, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa told the devotees that Prabhupāda's outlook seemed to change, depending on the people around him and the news he received; and he told them of Prabhupāda's plans to go to the West.

That evening, when Śrīla Prabhupāda called for "Tamāla and the others," the devotees gathered and went up to Prabhupāda's balcony, not knowing what to expect. Śrīla Prabhupāda was lying on his bed. "Sit down," he said. "I want simply to see you all. It gives me vital force." Mercifully and lovingly he looked upon his devotees as they sat around him. The air was filled with frankincense billowing from the pot of coals Upendra had prepared for keeping mosquitoes away. Evening āraṭi began in the temple, and the sounds of the kīrtana rose to the little balcony. One by one the men present began to massage Prabhupāda. Śrutakīrti and Satsvarūpa were each massaging a leg, while Tamāla Kṛṣṇa massaged Prabhupāda's head. Another devotee fanned. Prabhupāda lay back with his eyes closed peacefully. "You are all Vaiṣṇavas," he said. "Be merciful to me."

Śrīla Prabhupāda frankly wanted to hear good news. It inspired him to continue. He didn't want to hear other news. His secretary would read him letters in the afternoon, and Prabhupāda began allowing the other devotees to be present. Once when they entered his room he said, "If in this world there is one Vaiṣṇava, he can deliver all the world."

"You are that one Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Satsvarūpa.

"You become," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Each of you. Why not?"

"We can try," said Guru-kṛpā Swami.

"Yes, try," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "But follow. Do not imitate."

"Today we have a letter about book distribution," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "the monthly report."

"That is the real good news," said Prabhupāda, and he listened with full attention as Tamāla Kṛṣṇa read the BBT newsletter. He was pleased and absorbed, sometimes shaking his head and smiling to hear the achievements of his disciples. Then he heard a long letter from Ghaṇaśyāma about his triumphant book distribution in Eastern Europe. When he heard a letter from Tulasi dāsa, who was developing a Kṛṣṇa conscious farm community in South Africa, he commented, "This letter makes my chest swell, that I have such disciples performing such activities."

In another letter, a devotee wrote a prayer stating that all his Godbrothers were praying for Prabhupāda, and he hoped that Kṛṣṇa would respond. "Surely," said Prabhupāda, "I am practically living on your prayers. I haven't eaten in the last six months. So I must be simply living on your prayers." And hearing in a letter from South America that devotees were praying for him, he said, "I think I will have to stay. Kṛṣṇa is very kind. He is bhakta-vatsala. So many devotees are praying, it cannot be frustrated. I think this is why I am feeling inspiration to go out. In this condition, anyone else would prepare for death, but I am going on a tour. I don't think of it as sentiment. Kṛṣṇa is actually present as the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I am not without Vṛndāvana wherever I go to our temples."

Pañcadraviḍa Swami wrote that he would exchange his youth for Śrīla Prabhupāda's old age. "We are the same age," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "The body has nothing to do with the ātmā. In the Vaikuṇṭha world, we are the same age. New life, new boys—nava-yauvana. The outward dress does not affect one." As a further reply to Pañcadraviḍa, Prabhupāda dictated, "May Kṛṣṇa give you long life, and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You are our future hope."

For the devotees who had not been with Prabhupāda in months, it was like old times, sitting with him and hearing him answer letters and give advice for becoming victorious in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Hearing him discourse made everything all right. But as they were leaving his room, he said softly, "These are my last days."

When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa got an especially dynamic report from Hamsadūta Swami in Sri Lanka, he decided to bring it to Śrīla Prabhupāda early in the morning. Prabhupāda had just finished his bath and was sitting upstairs on the balcony, just before his nine-thirty darśana in the temple. He wore a tulasī garland from Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma as well as a fresh flower garland. He reclined on a round bolster pillow and listened.

Hamsadūta's letter contained news of a debate he was having with a famous atheist in Colombo, a Dr. Kovoov. As soon as Tamāla Kṛṣṇa began to read the letter, however, Prabhupāda asked to hear Dr. Kovoov's response. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa then began reading from a news clipping enclosed in the letter.

"Das and Swami asked whether scientists can make a chicken to come out of a plastic egg," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa read. "I do not know whether they are aware that scientists have made over ten elements, such as fermium, plutonium, einsteinium—"

Prabhupāda interrupted, "Rascal. You are simply producing empty sound. Where is the chicken, rascal? The chicken, the hen, is better than the scientist. She has produced another egg within a week. You simply say this and that, this and that, this and that, that's all. What is your value? We don't give you any value. You are less important than the chicken."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa resumed reading: "We have created over ten elements that even God—"

Again Prabhupāda interrupted. "Who cares for your creation? Without your creation the egg is there."

"No, he says," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa went back to reading the text, "even God could not create them, because He did not know the technology involved in making them."

"God kicks on your mouth," said Prabhupāda. "He doesn't require to take your creation. Without your creation He can do everything. God kicks on your mouth with shoes. Talkative nonsense. Tell him like that."

"I'm sure Hamsadūta did," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "Next we'll read his reply. Anyway, the scientist goes on, 'Are these two men aware of the success of the Sri Lanka scientist Dr—' "

Prabhupāda: "Who cares of his scientists?"

"“The Nobel Prize–winner in synthesizing amino acids—”"

"Nobel Prize–winner," scoffed Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Another rascal has given him a Nobel Prize. He is a rascal, and another rascal has given. Sūrī-sākṣī matta. In a liquor house the witness is a drunkard. If there is an incident within the liquor shop and the proprietor of the liquor shop has brought some witnesses, but all of them are drunkards—what is the value of that? As soon as you are drunkard, immediately you are rejected."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa read on, and Prabhupāda continued to interrupt him at almost every sentence. The devotees had not seen Prabhupāda so fiery in weeks. When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa read Hamsadūta's reply, Prabhupāda was pleased to see how many of the same points his disciple had made. "He is putting very strong arguments," said Prabhupāda. "This is preaching!"

Two factors were making Śrīla Prabhupāda indecisive about going West. One was the worldly formalities of passport and U.S. residency card, and the other was Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal hesitancy, based on reports from the astrologer. His health was, of course, the main factor, but at times he seemed ready to disregard everything and order his servants to somehow take him to London. Already he had sent Abhirāma to Calcutta to deal with certain complications. His U.S. residency "green card" had expired, and the Consulate in Delhi had insisted that he come for an interview. Meanwhile, Prabhupāda's passport and a temporary visa were being readied and would take four or five days. One of the Āyur Vedic doctors who sometimes visited told Prabhupāda he should wait a week or so.

But Prabhupāda found simply working up the will for travel, and then not going, and then deciding again to go, was exhausting. On hearing the latest news, that the U.S. Consulate insisted on an interview—which seemed to be a physical impossibility—he couldn't rest. Lying on his bed for hours, he finally called Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and said, "I want to go. Can you arrange to carry me? Somehow or other take me. Here I don't expect any good. Psychological enthusiasm is there. Don't be afraid. I am not afraid. Either to die in the temple here or there—it is all Vaikuṇṭha." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked to first discuss this with a few of the G.B.C. men who were present, but when the devotees came into Prabhupāda's room that afternoon, Prabhupāda said, "No discussions. I have made up my mind. Arrange immediately for going."

But again there were complications. The doctor asked Śrīla Prabhupāda to wait another week, and Prabhupāda also did not want to leave India without his green card for the U.S. He sent Balavanta to Calcutta to try and get the green card. With so many matters unsettled, Prabhupāda remained undecided whether to go to England now or wait.

"I plan to stay in America," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "I will not come back until I complete the Bhāgavatam. I want to organize there. The American boys are so nice. If I make everything strong then the movement will endure. Let us go now. The doctor will say four days for the medicine to act, then wait a little longer. This is their method."

Finally a report came from Abhirāma in Calcutta that the passport had been secured and the American Consulate in Calcutta would help in getting the green card. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa ran upstairs and told Śrīla Prabhupāda, "There is very good news." Śrīla Prabhupāda was lying down in bed, but when he heard the news he began to slowly clap his hands, saying, "Give me good news and keep me alive!" He began to think ahead to London. "The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities there are so nice," he said. "Rādhā-London-īśvara—an innocent boy, He is." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa reminded Śrīla Prabhupāda how they had obtained those Deities.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "it was unexpected. I was in a hopeless condition, but Kṛṣṇa said, 'Here I am. Take Me.' " Śrīla Prabhupāda thought of the Bhaktivedanta Manor. "That lawn before my room is magnificent," he said. "I think good time is coming. Madhudviṣa has come, and Gaurasundara has come—lost child has come. These are good signs." As he spoke on, his voice, which had sounded at first small and weak, grew in strength. "Mistake there may be," he said, referring to the fall of some of his disciples. "But it can be rectified. At the time be very careful not to commit mistakes. Kṛṣṇa never forgets a person who does a little service."

"You also never forget, Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"How can I forget? You have all helped me to execute the mission of Lord Caitanya and my Guru Mahārāja. I always pray to Kṛṣṇa to give you strength. I am insignificant. I cannot do anything. But I pray to Kṛṣṇa to give you strength." Prabhupāda recalled how after installing the Deities in Australia he had thought, "These mlecchas and yavanas, what will they do with the Deity?" Then the next time he went there he saw that they were worshiping nicely. "Try to do everything nicely," he said, "and Kṛṣṇa will help. Whatever I have done has been done on this principle. Whatever my Guru Mahārāja taught me, I tried to the best of my capacity to carry out."

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke on, carried by waves of transcendental emotion and carrying his loving disciples with him. "When I go to America," he said, "especially Los Angeles and New York, I feel at home."

At the mention of New York, he began to remember his first days there. "I was like a street boy," he said. "I was going here and there, sightseeing. I was in New York City, but one morning I saw all the walls were white. 'How have they become white? Who has whitewashed them?' I thought. I went downstairs, and there was so much snow. I went with an umbrella and purchased a pack of milk in the snow. At that time I was living in a dungeon. It was always dark. But I didn't care. Whatever difficulty, I didn't care. I only wanted to preach. Sometimes people would touch me, like men on the Bowery, but no one was inimical. Everyone was friendly. Even the bums. When I went to enter my New York building, the bums would get up from where they were lying down and let me pass by. I couldn't understand the difference between friends and enemies."

Prabhupāda said a friend of his had been shocked to hear that he was moving to the Bowery. "Oh, Swamiji," his friend had said, "you have gone to Bowery Street? It is a horrible place!"

"I passed through many dangers," continued Prabhupāda, "yet I couldn't understand that, 'Here is danger.' Everywhere I thought, 'This is my home.' "

Śrīla Prabhupāda recalled random details of his first preaching endeavors at 26 Second Avenue. "I was working very hard," he said. "Lecturing at seven in the morning and seven in the evening. Cooking and distributing prasādam to anyone who was coming. Do you remember, Satsvarūpa? You would bring some mango and fruit. Daily you would come. Those days are passed. Now I feel happiness remembering those days. Remember that boy Stryadhīśa? He would eat so many capātis. He would never have enough. Every time he wanted more I would give him four capātis at a time. Kīrtanānanda, Acyutānanda. Seventy-five people would attend that Sunday feast."

Prabhupāda recalled the first San Francisco temple, the first Los Angeles temple, going to Seattle, pushing Gaurasundara to go to Hawaii, receiving a letter from Govinda dāsi in Hawaii who said that it was mango season, except that when Prabhupāda went there, "it was rat season, and all night the rats were running in the rafters."

"This is a new life, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "There is no doubt about it." His thoughts returned to his upcoming tour, and he said he could sleep in three seats across in the airplane. But he cautioned the devotees to be careful that once he got to America he not get kidnapped. Previously he had considered that Kṛṣṇa may have been detaining him from going to the West so that he would not be disturbed by the demons. But now he would go in any case.

Prabhupāda was ready to leave, but the delays and anxieties persisted. Balavanta returned from Calcutta, but Śrīla Prabhupāda was not pleased to see him. Why, he demanded, had he come back without Abhirāma? Balavanta said he had wanted to be with Śrīla Prabhupāda and he thought that Abhirāma could handle the last steps of getting the green card. Prabhupāda reprimanded Balavanta, saying service to the guru was better than being with him.

Then Tamāla Kṛṣṇa left for Delhi to arrange for the tickets. When two days later Śrīla Prabhupāda learned that there might be a delay of several days before Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and the other Americans in the party could leave India, he said he could leave immediately, without them, taking Śrutakīrti as his servant.

Then Prabhupāda heard of an airport strike in London. And the night before his scheduled departure, his health worsened. Many devotees urged him not to go. But amazingly, the tickets and passport arrived, and at midnight on August 28, after a six-month stay in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda and his party left from the front gate of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir and headed for Delhi in a caravan of cars.

Just as Prabhupāda was leaving, Bisan Chandra Seth, a friend of Prabhupāda's in Vṛndāvana, had come and protested, "It will not be good if something happens and you leave your body outside of Vṛndāvana." Prabhupāda told Mr. Seth that, because his disciples were so much in love with him, he could not easily refuse their request. If the trip became too difficult, he said, he would return immediately. He told Mr. Seth that he was simply depending on Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda rode lying on a mattress in the back seat of his car, and after two hours of driving over roads greatly damaged by flooding, they reached Delhi airport. Śrīla Prabhupāda waited in the car. The early morning was warm, and the devotees opened the car doors. Bhavānanda Goswami, who

had just been released from jail in Bengal, had arrived in time to see Śrīla Prabhupāda. Bhavānanda approached the car and placed his head on Prabhupāda's feet.

"How are you?" Prabhupāda asked. Bhavānanda reported that everything was improving in Māyāpur. All the local sādhus and citizens were now siding with ISKCON against the hoodlums who had attacked the temple.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was moved to an airport waiting room prior to going through the customs formalities. About ten devotees were there to see him off as he left with his party of four: Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Upendra, Pradyumna, and Pradyumna's wife, Arundhatī. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat up right on the airport couch, silently fingering the beads in his bead bag. His bare feet, resting in his sandals, were slightly swollen, as were his hands. He looked to see who was present and slightly nodded to each disciple in recognition.

The devotees felt there was no need for Śrīla Prabhupāda to talk. Just being with him was wonderful and fully satisfying. He had already spoken to them fully and had given himself in his books in many other ways. So they chanted and looked lovingly at him, up until the last moment when he went by wheelchair onto the plane.

SPL 53: Krishna's Great Soldier

CHAPTER FIFTY THREE

Kṛṣṇa's Great Soldier

During the long flight, Śrīla Prabhupāda remained solemn. His servants were helpless to alleviate the difficult situation, as they might have in Vṛndāvana, and cigarette smoke, loud talk, and drunken laughter surrounded them. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, despite his concern, did not know what to do for Śrīla Prabhupāda or what to ask him. Śrīla Prabhupāda had often expressed a dislike for conversations with questions like "How are you feeling?"

Prabhupāda's servants knew that they could not fully understand their spiritual master's thinking, and the scriptures also warned that one should not attempt to understand the mind of the Vaiṣṇava. But they knew their service was to relieve him—by arranging for quiet, by assisting him in bathing and dressing, or by taking him to the temple for darśana of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma. Now, however, they were helpless to perform any of these tasks. Now, more than ever, Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Kṛṣṇa's hands. Earlier that year, in Bhubaneswar, he had said that his disciples, although willing to help, could not change the situation if he was inconvenienced by old age. And he had even given the example that although he might be in his opulent quarters at the Bhaktivedanta Manor, that did not mean he would not suffer inconvenience. But Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, being very sensitive to Prabhupāda's desires and experienced in serving him, several times moved over and spoke with his spiritual master.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "when you get to London the devotees will be so pleased to be with you."

"Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "it is good that we are going." Otherwise, Śrīla Prabhupāda was mostly silent, meditating on Kṛṣṇa and his mission of bringing love of Kṛṣṇa to the world.

The flight turned out to be an unusually exhaustive ordeal. When the plane landed in Rome it was delayed there for four hours, and Śrīla Prabhupāda had to wait in the airport lounge. When finally they arrived over London, the captain announced that they could not land yet due to the strike, and so they continued circling for hours. Finally, twenty hours after leaving Delhi, the plane landed at Heathrow Airport.

Customs and immigrations officials and the British Airways ground crew allowed Śrīla Prabhupāda, in a wheelchair, to quickly pass through all the formalities. And soon he was amid a throng of enthusiastic disciples and then sitting in a white Rolls Royce enroute to Bhaktivedanta Manor.

The London airport and the busy highways leading into the city are certainly a great contrast to the peace and spirituality of Vṛndāvana. But for Śrīla Prabhupāda to suddenly leave the climate and transcendental culture of India to fly to the West was not unusual. He had been doing that, going from East to West, from north to south, from one nation to another—to the snowlands, to the tropics, to the cities, to the jungles, mixing with white people, black people, and Orientals—at an almost constant pace for years. He was no Hindu village guru suddenly astounded to see hundreds of automobiles racing on the highway or to see factory smoke or skyscrapers or the blind rat race of the meat-eaters. There was no question of "culture shock" for Śrīla Prabhupāda.

But there was a shock for his disciples in London, who had never imagined that he would be so thin or that anyone could travel in such condition. For the devotees who had been at the airport to meet him, it had been a heart-rending experience. Even those who had heard the reports of Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana were not emotionally prepared for such a change. Prabhupāda was as transcendental as ever, or even more than ever, but the devotees were shocked at first to see him so different. Now he appeared like a powerful sage who had been undergoing long austerities for the benefit of humankind and who had become transcendental to his body, although living within it.

At Bhaktivedanta Manor, Śrīla Prabhupāda went from the car to a palanquin and entered the temple room, where about three hundred disciples and well-wishers were waiting to be with him. Devotees from all the ISKCON centers in northern and southern Europe had rushed to England on a last-minute notice. They were holding kīrtana for Śrīla Prabhupāda as he entered, and they, too, like the devotees at the airport, were deeply shocked. And for a moment, when they saw Śrīla Prabhupāda wearing his dark sunglasses and appearing so thin, the kīrtana almost stopped. Yet they simultaneously remained joyful and ecstatic, realizing that despite such difficulty, he had actually come to the West to be with them and encourage their Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They had been praying for him for months. The prayer, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You desire, please cure Śrīla Prabhupāda," had been printed on a banner and hung over Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana.

The devotees of England, wanting to reciprocate with Śrīla Prabhupāda with more than just the sentiment of their words, were also leading the world in transcendental book distribution. When, a few weeks ago, they had heard that Śrīla Prabhupāda might be coming to England, it hadn't seemed possible, considering his physical condition. They had heard he might leave his body at any

moment, but then later they had heard he was better and he was coming to London. Even when they had heard he was definitely coming, they had been incredulous. But now it had come true.

The Deity room curtains were open, and Śrīla Prabhupāda beheld Rādhā-Gokulānanda. Some devotees stood in front of him, and with a small gesture characteristic of his hand, he waved them aside. Without any change of expression, he sat with concentrated attention facing the gorgeously dressed Deities of Rādhā-Gokulānanda, whom he had named four years ago when calling for Them to come and be worshiped here by the devotees of England.

Without saying a word, Prabhupāda went up to his room, where as many devotees as possible joined him. He had always said he felt comfortably at home in these quarters, and once again he was pleased to see outside his window the large lawn, the lake, and the ducks. The devotees sat before him with their palms folded, aware that this was no casual meeting. They had already offered their lives completely to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and there was nothing more they could offer in words that would equal their dedication.

A devotee placed a large silver plate full of prasādam on the table before Śrīla Prabhupāda. He picked up a milk sweet and tasted it, then a piece of mango. The hundred devotees who squeezed into the room and looked in from the doorway watched his every movement with fixed attention. There was complete silence. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda looked up, smiling.

"So," he said, "is everyone all right?"

"Jaya, Śrīla Prabhupāda!" was the warm reply. The tension of seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda's different appearance suddenly melted, and everyone simply wanted to make him feel comfortable and to please him with their service.

For the rest of the day Śrīla Prabhupāda remained alone, resting. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa lectured to the devotees in the temple room, explaining how Śrīla Prabhupāda had decided it was better to travel, even at such a great risk, than to be invalid. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa told how someone had suggested Śrīla Prabhupāda go to Tehran or Italy or France, because of the airport strike in London, but how he had said, "I want to go to London." Śrīla Prabhupāda has come to take shelter of you, said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. He said that, according to śāstra, a devotee should stay in Vṛndāvana, especially at the end of his life, but because Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master had ordered him to go to the West and preach, he had returned, determined to fulfill that mission until the last.

The devotees were deeply touched that Śrīla Prabhupāda's coming was at least partially in recognition of their preaching. They resolved to reciprocate with him while he was there by holding a book distribution marathon. If they showed him their dedication by preaching, maybe he would stay a long time.

At two o'clock the next morning Bhagavān and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa went into Śrīla Prabhupāda's quarters to attend him. Śrīla Prabhupāda, who had just awakened, was very pleased to see Bhagavān, his leader from southern Europe. This was why he had come to the West: to be with his preachers, and to be encouraged by them.

"Tamāla has brought me with great difficulty," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "It was the correct thing. I thought, what is the use of dying? Better to come. So Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma has placed me in the care of Rādhā-Gokulānanda."

Bhagavān presented Śrīla Prabhupāda with some newly printed books: an Italian Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, another volume of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in French, and other books in Dutch. The total book distribution in Europe, Bhagavān reported, had surpassed that of America.

"Tamāla, did you hear that?" Prabhupāda asked. "This is my life. Come here." Śrīla Prabhupāda began rubbing Bhagavān's head, and tears fell from his eyes. "You have no problems," he said to Bhagavān. In his own work on Śrīla Prabhupāda's behalf, Bhagavān had been encountering a rough period, but when Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "You have no problems," he took it that if he persevered, everything would be all right. As long as he stayed engaged in devotional service he had no problems. For Bhagavān, there was no need for Prabhupāda to say more; Prabhu pāda's order was already his heart and soul. But now that order and Śrīla Prabhupāda's love entered deeper into his heart. Śrīla Prabhupāda's mood was one of pure thankfulness, without his usual critical instructions. He simply wanted to be with his devotees and encourage them.

"Produce books," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "These books are all the mercy of my Guru Mahārāja. No author throughout the world has written so many books—Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens. Neither their books have been so widely read or with such appreciation."

When Prabhupāda came down to the temple in the morning, all the devotees were able to be with him. "Devotees here are all Vaikuṇṭha men," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "—good-looking and nice-dressing. Gokulānanda is so beautiful. I shall be glad to die in that condition—amongst the devotees and seeing Gokulānanda."

The devotees had come to see that Śrīla Prabhupāda actually looked very wonderful in his dark sunglasses and freshly pressed silk dhotī and kurtā, with clean, clear Vaiṣṇava tilaka on his forehead. He would come gliding down the stairs on the palanquin carefully carried by two able-bodied disciples, and he would sit on the vyāsāsana and watch them perform kīrtana of the holy name. Since he rarely spoke, the kīrtana and his appreciation of it was the main exchange between him and his disciples.

Externally, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave very little indication of even appreciating the kīrtana. Those who were standing or dancing near to him, however, could see behind his glasses the tears sprinkling from the corners of his eyes and onto his cheeks. And all the devotees chanted and danced, rejoicing in the knowledge that Śrīla Prabhupāda simply wanted to be with them. They knew that although he was a pure devotee and self-satisfied, he could actually be inspired by his disciples' affection. By their intense enthusiasm to serve and praise Kṛṣṇa under his order, he could become enlivened to stay in the world longer and preach.

The devotees in the Manor agreed that Rādhā-Gokulānanda seemed to be looking especially at Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he was looking especially at Them. Some felt that by witnessing Śrīla Prabhupāda and Rādhā-Gokulānanda, they were looking directly upon the spiritual world, seeing Kṛṣṇa and His

pure devotee. Therefore, there was no need for talks or demonstrations further than what Śrīla Prabhupāda was giving everyone by coming to be with them in the temple room.

Each morning the kīrtanas would build enthusiastically. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked that devotees not sing the guru-pūjā song because it created too much emotion for Śrīla Prabhupāda, so they chanted the Pañca-tattva mantra and then Hare Kṛṣṇa. After half an hour, the singing and chanting would be fervid, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would sometimes tap his thumbs together. Just this slightest movement of his body increased the intensity of the kīrtana. Then with the raising of one finger, Śrīla Prabhupāda set the whole roomful of hundreds of devotees into jumping ecstasy. The devotees felt that by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and dancing they were somehow singing and praying for Śrīla Prabhupāda's good health and continued life. Śrīla Prabhupāda would sit, unmoving. But the devotees knew his desires, and many of them continued jumping several feet into the air, almost touching the chandeliers. After a wild transcendental hour of kīrtana Śrīla Prabhupāda would go upstairs again, carried over the heads of the devotees on the palanquin.

When the devotees in London heard that Śrīla Prabhupāda was getting many invitations to go to America, they began to worry. They were thinking this would be the last time they would see him, and they wanted to keep him with them forever. If they could distribute an incredible number of books, then maybe he would live longer and stay longer at Bhaktivedanta Manor. They were already feeling privileged that Śrīla Prabhupāda had chosen their temple out of all others, and as they spoke among themselves, they concluded that Rādhā-London-īśvara and Rādhā-Gokulānanda must be Prabhupāda's favorite Deities. They realized that aside from chanting and serving, there was nothing they could do to help Śrīla Prabhupāda and keep him with them, and this inability made them helpless. Despite their efforts, everything was up to Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda confided to his secretary that he was disturbed by thoughts of India, and that he had no wish to go back. "In India," he said, "whatever project I made the government has simply given me obstacles. I had to tax my brain so much." India, he said, had lost its culture. "Now they think everyone is God, and they do not understand bhakti, the teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā. From the members of Parliament to the members of the street, everywhere there is suspicion that I have brought the CIA. Such a mistake they have made!"

Since Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to London, his emotions were much more noticeable than before. Where he would have checked his emotions before, he now did not or could not. He frequently cried in ecstasy. Because he was saturated with love for Kṛṣṇa, at any moment his tears might come—while hearing a kīrtana, seeing the Deities, hearing of a devotee's service. The tears would pour down his cheeks, making his visage more beautiful. At other times, he would utter a long, deep "Hmmm," not out of physical pain, since he said he was quite all right, but out of his Kṛṣṇa conscious emotions, the ecstasy of his love of God.

After a few days, Śrīla Prabhupāda got a good report on the progress of his U.S. residency. Balavanta had gone to Washington, D.C., and now phoned to say Śrīla Prabhupāda would have no difficulty in getting his expired residency renewed. All the officials Balavanta had contacted were friendly and invited Śrīla Prabhupāda to return. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa conveyed this while Śrīla Prabhupāda sat on a mat, his frail body being massaged by Upendra. Instantly tears welled up in Śrīla Prabhupāda's eyes, and with a choked voice he said, "America has been so good to me to give me money, men,

everything. I have no designation that "this is my country," but because they have given me so much facility, I cannot forget my obligation to them. I want to make them happy, and through them, the whole world."

Śrīla Prabhupāda looked forward to traveling to America shortly after Janmāṣṭamī, which would fall on September 6, two weeks from the date of his arrival in England. "I want to live a little longer," he said, "to make everything more perfect."

"Will you do this by enthusing the devotees by staying with them," asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "or is there a specific program?"

"A specific program," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I want to introduce varṇāśrama. At our Pennsylvania farm, the biggest problem of life is solved: food."

Letters from Ghanaśyāma in Eastern Europe had brought Śrīla Prabhupāda repeated pleasure. When Ghanaśyāma came to England, therefore, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa brought him before Śrīla Prabhupāda. Calling him near, Prabhupāda stroked his head. "This is the paramparā system," he said. "My Guru Mahārāja pushed me, I am pushing you, and you are pushing others. It is like a train." The following day, at Tamāla Kṛṣṇa's request, Ghanaśyāma came in and read his latest report—which was lengthy—to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He explained some of the difficulties in his preaching and how he was getting around them. But Prabhupāda's mood had changed, and he reminded his disciple that the credit was all due to Kṛṣṇa.

Then Harikeśa Swami, the G.B.C. secretary for northern and East Europe, arrived, he entered Prabhupāda's room and offered prostrated obeisances. Śrīla Prabhupāda, his eyes overflowing with tears, reached out and rubbed his disciple's head, and Harikeśa also began to cry.

Harikeśa explained that he was setting up his own press for producing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books in European languages. "Very good," said Prabhupāda. "As a father likes to see his estate nicely managed, so I am like that. Get places and print books."

Harikeśa Mahārāja had brought with him most of the book distributors from Germany, and he arranged that they meet privately with Śrīla Prabhupāda. The men, most of whom had never been with Prabhupāda, gathered in his room and sat in overwhelming appreciation of the moment. Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted, *yāre dekha tāre kaha "kṛṣṇa-upadeśa,"* and then asked, "So what is this *kṛṣṇa-upadeśa*?" At first no one replied, but then one of the boys spoke and said, "One should preach everywhere."

"No," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "what is *kṛṣṇa-upadeśa*?" Then again there was a silence. This time another boy recited, "Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja." [Bg. 18.66] Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted that and spoke for a few minutes about surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Thinking it an opportune moment, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa brought out a package of color photographs just arrived from Los Angeles. It was a complete story-in-pictures of the recent Los Angeles Ratha-yātrā. The pictures were brightly colorful eight-by-ten-inch enlargements, and as Śrīla Prabhupāda saw one after another and heard the descriptions from his secretary, he began to make long, low humming sounds, and tears came to his eyes.

Earlier that morning, as soon as he had awakened, Śrīla Prabhupāda had begun spontaneously speaking about the Ratha-yātrā he had performed as a child in Calcutta, and now he was seeing the pictures of a grand procession and festival conducted by his disciples. Seeing the photo of the chariots with a large crowd following, Śrīla Prabhupāda raised his eyebrows and said, "We have never seen such carts!" Another photo showed long lines of people waiting to see the "Changing Bodies" exhibit, a diorama depicting the transmigration of the soul. "I told you this would happen!" Prabhupāda exclaimed. "I am very much glad to see this." Śrīla Prabhupāda remained so affected by seeing the Ratha-yātrā pictures that he wouldn't take his usual massage. "Not now," he said in a choked voice, and he sat meditatively, silent for two hours.

On Janmāṣṭamī day Śrīla Prabhupāda rode in a rented Rolls Royce to the temple at Bury Place in downtown London to see Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-London-īśvara. Entering the building in a palanquin, Prabhupāda came before Rādhā-London-īśvara and slowly removed his sunglasses, his eyes flooding with tears, while around him devotees chanted his name and the names of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. On the way back to the Manor, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa recited to Śrīla Prabhupāda the many pastimes of Prabhupāda's preaching days in London.

The next day was Vyāsa-pūjā, Śrīla Prabhupāda's eighty-second birthday. Again, upon waking he recalled his childhood and how an uncle had called him Nandulal, because he was born on the day Nanda Mahārāja gave presents to the brāhmaṇas, the day after Kṛṣṇa's birthday. Śrīla Prabhupāda went down to the temple, and after a fully exultant kīrtana by hundreds of devotees, he accepted, without tasting, a three-tier, five-foot-long birthday cake. He noticed that the devotees had only used eighty-one candles, due to counting age by the Western method, so another candle was added. At Śrīla Prabhupāda's request, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa stood and spoke.

The next day Śrīla Prabhupāda's health suddenly became much worse, and he couldn't come down to the temple. This was the first crisis since his coming to England, and suddenly his plans changed. Instead of going on to the United States as he had planned, he now requested that he be taken back to India. He spoke of Bombay. "If I live a few days more," he said, "let me see the opening of the Bombay temple. We can wait here and then fly to Bombay. I have worked so hard for it. If I see the opening and then die, it will be a very peaceful death. Even if I live, I can come back here."

The health crisis seemed to pass, but Śrīla Prabhupāda now felt he would be unable to go to New York. He asked to hear the various astrological calculations. "Let us have a laugh," he said. The readings predicted that these would be the most difficult days.

For many of the devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda's not going to America upset their hopes of his getting better and living a long time. But Prabhupāda felt he had traveled as far as he could, and now he should return to Bombay and Vṛndāvana. For a few days more he stayed, waiting for a clearer indication from Kṛṣṇa. And he resumed going to the temple in the morning.

Brahmānanda Swami had come from Africa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda watched with pleasure as heavy-set Brahmānanda, the first disciple to dance for him eleven years ago in New York, rose to dance

again before his spiritual master. As Brahmānanda jumped up and down, dancing ecstatically, Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled and clapped his hands.

Afterwards, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked Śrīla Prabhupāda what he had prayed that morning as he had sat looking intently at the Deities. Prabhupāda replied, "I was praying to Rādhā-Gokulānanda to please engage me in the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsavihārī."

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to return to India, and his desire was his servants' order. "If I survive this time," he said, "we shall do Vṛndāvana parikrama. You can carry me on a palanquin."

At the airport there were delays. During the wait, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa put earphones on Śrīla Prabhupāda so he could listen to a tape-recorded kīrtana. Prabhupāda slowly rocked his head, listening, until finally he was allowed to board the aircraft, riding in a wheelchair.

* * *

September 14

With no disruptive incidents, Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived with his party in Bombay, where he was promptly escorted from the plane into a waiting car and driven to Hare Krishna Land at Juhu. This time the elevator worked, and Śrīla Prabhupāda reached his quarters on the fifth floor and went at once to bed.

He called for Girirāja, who came and sat on the floor beside the bed. Prabhupāda told him how in Vṛndāvana, Mr. Somaiya, a very important man of Bombay known to both of them, had come to see him in bed and had started to cry out of sympathy. Prabhupāda then told Girirāja of his pleasant stay in London, especially mentioning the kīrtanas, which he said were wonderful. When Girirāja asked if the chiseling and hammering and other noises of temple construction in Bombay were going to disturb him, he replied that it was like music. He then lay back and rested.

When Prabhupāda awoke at the end of the day, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked him if the noises were bothering him. "These sounds do not disturb me at all," he replied, "because I am thinking that work is being completed. You can note the distinction, how in London I was feeling restless, but here not. It is because I like Bombay. Of all the cities in India, I like it the most."

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to get reports from some of his sannyāsī disciples in Bombay. He heard good news from Gargamuni Swami of his party's selling complete sets of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Caitanya-caritāmṛta and also other books to libraries and universities throughout India. Now they were preparing to go into Muslim countries to sell books. "Whoever preaches in the Muslim countries," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "I take the dust of his feet on my head." Lokanātha Swami told Śrīla Prabhupāda of his success in traveling to Indian villages in a bullock cart. Śrīla Prabhupāda loved it.

Within a day or two of his return to India, Prabhupāda had abandoned the simple regimen he had agreed upon with a doctor in England. The doctor had said Prabhupāda was a difficult patient. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa mentioned that when he had told the doctor that Śrīla Prabhupāda was trying to

cooperate, the doctor had said Śrīla Prabhupāda's only compromise was to wait until Friday instead of Thursday before traveling. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a little laugh and said, "And then I went even earlier—Tuesday. Supercompromise. I could understand when he wanted blood that he would begin his allopathic treatments."

For weeks Śrīla Prabhupāda had been taking a commercially prepared food supplement, Complān, but now he refused it. "What is the use of artificial food," he said, "when there is natural? You Westerners like the taste of canned, frozen, preserved, rotten food. You eat and then keep the leftovers for seven months, and this you like. And you like drinking cold milk. This Complān is not fresh. I shall try to live on milk and fruit juice. Nothing artificial."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's plan was to stay in Bombay and wait for the grand opening of the temple, now scheduled for Rāma-vijaya Daśamī, in five weeks. But he didn't expect to get much stronger. Although he had spoken in favor of fresh food, he was actually taking nothing more than a little fruit juice and a little mung-jala (water in which mung beans have been soaked).

Śrīla Prabhupāda began chanting constantly on his japa beads, which he insisted on keeping around his neck at all times. During his massage he would finger the beads and silently chant, and even while resting they remained around his neck.

When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked Śrīla Prabhupāda how he felt, he simply replied, "Crisis." After a few days he named a certain Bombay doctor and suggested that he be brought in. But Tamāla Kṛṣṇa gave arguments as to why calling in yet another doctor would not be good at this time. Śrīla Prabhupāda listened and agreed.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said he felt confident that Śrīla Prabhupāda would live to see the temple opening in Bombay and later go on to Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed very relieved by these words and rubbed Tamāla Kṛṣṇa's head affectionately, saying, "May your words be blessed. Bless me that I may fix up my mind."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was pleased to see Prabhupāda take some encouragement, although he felt himself to be in no position to bless his exalted spiritual master. But this kind of exchange had been occurring for weeks now, where Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and others sometimes took the role of Śrīla Prabhupāda's advisors. Such dealings made the disciples feel uncomfortable, yet because Śrīla Prabhupāda was instigating the relationship, they accepted it as very intimate service. He had openly said, "Encourage me," and had allowed himself to become dependent in many ways on the care and intelligence of his disciples. Sometimes he was like a small child turning to his disciples to pick him up and carry him. But his disciples remained aware—and if they didn't, he reminded them—that he was deliberately arranging and allowing this so that they could render him intimate service, for only by serving Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee can one attain love of Kṛṣṇa. This intimate service was completely spiritual, and for doctors who came and went, with their medicines and prescriptions, it was incomprehensible.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was teaching his disciples right up until his last days—instructing them in how they should prepare for their own inevitable death. And he was also instructing them in the advanced stage of devotional service, testing them to see whether they were willing to serve, not

just as official devotees but out of spontaneous love, love which goes sometimes beyond the rules and regulations. This love was tested, for example, by the disciples' willingness to stay up all hours of the night and constantly attend Śrīla Prabhupāda, assisting him in even his most basic bodily functions. And it was tested as Prabhupāda engaged his disciples in the ordeal of deciding whether he should fight to live or pass away peacefully. It was on the basis of such intimacy, for example, that Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, unsure what was best, argued against Śrīla Prabhupāda's request for a certain doctor. He was completely involved in Śrīla Prabhupāda's well-being, and he was always thinking about it and ready to do whatever was required.

Ultimately, Prabhupāda never changed from being the authority and master of all his disciples, and they knew it. They could offer countersuggestions, as he inspired them to reach across the barriers of ordinary protocol and serve him with love to their heart's content. He even allured them to reprimand him. But when he liked, he would have the final word, emerging again as the absolute authority for his disciples. It was only to serve his will that his disciples lived and acted. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that his disciples' determination and complete surrender and their desire and prayers for him to remain with them, for him to fight and stay—this was all that was still keeping him in the world.

Certainly Prabhupāda was not being kept in the world by Complan or by the ordinary therapeutic effects of massage. In fact, he was so thin that the massages were no longer actual massages, but were more soothing caresses, which could be given only by faithful, surrendered servants. When one day Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked Prabhupāda if he felt he could stay for five weeks until the temple opening, he replied, "If you encourage me."

Whatever his condition, Śrīla Prabhupāda always maintained his essence: aggressive in preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, thoughtful of others, humorous, and completely devoted to Kṛṣṇa. When Abhirāma joined them from England and exclaimed that Śrīla Prabhupāda's Bombay quarters were fit for Indra, the king of heaven, Śrīla Prabhupāda broke into a big, sustained smile. When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, after being absent for a few hours, returned before Prabhupāda and explained, "I was just resting because I was tired from the trip," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied by teasing him, "You already rested on the plane. You just like to sleep, especially in the car."

When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked Prabhupāda if he would see any important guests, Prabhupāda replied that he would only see Mr. Bhogilal Patel and Mr. Mahadevia if they came. A few minutes later, as if summoned, Mr. Mahadevia showed up and was brought before Prabhupāda. Although usually very talkative, Mr. Mahadevia seemed too shocked by Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance to speak as freely as usual. At Prabhupāda's request, however, he described the present political climate in India.

Prabhupāda asked to be raised up, and he showed an unusual amount of interest in the report. "They're missing the point," he said. "The whole world is. This is the disease of the body. One party is no better than the other. It is stool, one side or the other. What they can do?"

Although Prabhupāda was not able to go down to the temple for seeing Rādhā-Rāsavihārī, he daily asked to see Their picture, which he would look upon lovingly. He could also hear the āratī-kīrtanas coming from the temporary temple. Then one day he asked that the framed picture of Rādhā-Rāsavihārī be fixed to his bedpost so that he could see Them always.

On awakening one morning Prabhupāda immediately began talking: "Every living entity is suffering. From Brahma down to the ant, there is no happiness." And then he closed his eyes. Later he awoke and said, "Daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī/ mama māyā duratyayā." [Bg. 7.14] Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked Prabhupāda if he was thinking of these things while resting. "Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "I was dreaming."

Brahmānanda Swami arrived from England, and Prabhupāda spoke with him of how the senior disciples would have to maintain what he had given them. "You cannot expect me to have a young body like you," he said. "You cannot expect me to live forever. It will have to depend upon Kṛṣṇa." Brahmānanda listened with mixed pleasure and pain. He said that Prabhupāda's quarters were beautiful and that not only these quarters but everything in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was simply made for Śrīla Prabhupāda's pleasure. "I cannot take these with me," Prabhupāda replied. "I am leaving them for you to use."

Jayapatāka Swami arrived from Māyāpur, asking Śrīla Prabhupāda to sign a legal statement concerning the recent attack on the ISKCON center in Māyāpur. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said that Prabhupāda had already written his will, stating that everything in his name belonged to ISKCON; he didn't want anything further to do with management. Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed this, saying, "Now there is no other way but to make me completely aloof from all management."

Prabhupāda wanted to stay absorbed in hearing the holy name and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He liked to sit up in bed, wearing his reading spectacles and looking at the photo of Rādhā-Rāsavihārī, while a devotee read aloud from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. For hours at a time he would meditate in this way, hearing and seeing Kṛṣṇa. This was the medicine he desired. Those who observed him in this way could understand that he was completely transcendental to thoughts of his body and that he was relishing the reading with great relief. When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested that these readings go on each day, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "This is the most important thing. Read as much as possible."

One evening, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Brahmānanda recounted to Prabhupāda the history of his purchasing the Bombay land. Prabhupāda lay, listening carefully to each word of the narration of his tolerance and triumph over many obstacles.

At one point, Prabhupāda interjected, "That dog." The devotees paused, not knowing what he meant. Was he referring to the landlord or one of the politicians? But then he made it clear. He said that when he had stayed at the house of Mr. Sethi, he would have to ride each morning in Mr. Sethi's car to the beach, and he would have to sit next to Mr. Sethi's big German shepherd. Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to talk, and as he did, both Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Brahmānanda realized that he was still conducting a battle. He was fighting for the strength to go on preaching for Rādhā-Rāsavihārī, if They desired. At the end of the recitation, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa offered his obeisances and said, "All glories to Kṛṣṇa's great soldier!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda had been planning to stay for the Bombay temple opening and then to go on parikrama around Vṛndāvana, but now he thought of going early to Vṛndāvana. He asked that the G.B.C. men and certain others present in Bombay gather before him and decide. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa,

Brahmānanda, Surabhi, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, Hari-śauri, Girirāja, Upendra, Abhirāma, and Kulādri all entered and sat surrounding Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa began by making various comments in favor of going to Vṛndāvana. He directed his comments to Prabhupāda and pointed out that even if Prabhupāda were to remain in Bombay in his present condition, he would not be able to attend any of the functions. Also, Prabhupāda was known for his powerful speaking and preaching, and it would not be fitting for the public to see him in his present condition. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa also pointed out that Prabhupāda could come back to visit after the temple opening. Prabhupāda heard these remarks without commenting.

Brahmānanda Swami said that Śrīla Prabhupāda should definitely go to Vṛndāvana. Hari-śauri spoke next, saying that he felt it was difficult to decide but that it depended upon how strongly Prabhupāda desired to stay in Bombay as opposed to doing the best thing for his health. "It is for health," Prabhupāda replied, and Hari-śauri immediately said he was in favor of Prabhupāda's returning to Vṛndāvana.

Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, however, thought that it would be better if Prabhupāda remained in Bombay until after the opening. How could he leave Bombay after so many arrangements had been made and so many important guests had been invited? Surabhi also voted for Prabhupāda's staying in Bombay, because he wanted Prabhupāda to see the temple being opened. He said that if Prabhupāda went to Vṛndāvana, he might not come back.

Then Girirāja spoke. Each day in Bombay was very difficult for Prabhupāda, he said, and each successive day would be even more difficult. And the noise from the construction was constant. Therefore, Girirāja concluded, waiting three weeks would be too risky. As Girirāja spoke, Śrīla Prabhupāda moved his head in affirmation. But for the most part Prabhupāda was noncommittal, asking a question now and then, but mostly listening. For the devotees, the mood was very tense and momentous. Abhirāma spoke next, in favor of going to Vṛndāvana. Upendra said he didn't know.

If Prabhupāda's purpose in asking for opinions had been to get a majority vote, the decision had gone in favor of leaving Bombay. Even as they discussed, the hammering and chiseling noises were constant and almost drowned the sound of Prabhupāda's voice.

Prabhupāda wanted to also discuss the best course of treatment. His friend Dr. Ghosh had written recently, and Prabhupāda asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa to read the letter. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa then read aloud Dr. Ghosh's advice that Prabhupāda should go to a good hospital for a thorough check-up and treatment. Almost with the attitude of an impartial judge asking for discussion, Prabhupāda said, "So what is wrong with this proposal?"

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa mentioned that the doctors would probably want to give intravenous feeding. Prabhupāda replied, "What is the use of artificial feeding when there is no digestion?" Making a point in favor of the hospital, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa then remarked that although Āyur Vedic medicine was perfect, the practitioners have lost the science in the present day and are mostly quacks, whereas allopathic medicine, although imperfect, has many expert practitioners. Prabhupāda conceded.

"Well, Prabhupāda," said Upendra, "the doctor should come, but only here in your house. You should never go to the hospital." Abhirāma was even stronger about Prabhupāda's not going to the hospital. They already knew that Prabhupāda was not in favor of going to the hospital, and that in fact he had already made up his mind to go to Vṛndāvana. They took it that in his kindness and mercifulness he wanted to consult them and give them the opportunity to decide. At least apparently he was submitting himself to their decisions. But some of them got an eerie, uneasy feeling in thinking his well-being could be the subject of their argumentation.

Finally Prabhupāda concluded, "The hospital is not a guarantee, but we take it as up-to-date scientific knowledge. My Godbrother Tīrtha Mahārāja had to undergo all these treatments, and they were very proud that he died with the best scientific treatment. My Guru Mahārāja, however, did not like it when he was given injection. He objected, saying, "Why are you giving?" Going to a hospital means giving in to the mercy of the material scientists. Whatever they like, they will do. They cannot guarantee, and we cannot be confident. And going to Vṛndāvana—whatever may happen, let Kṛṣṇa do it. Hospital is a chance technique. Going to Vṛndāvana, I have no objections. But now there is a dilemma—I am neither dying nor living."

When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked whether the Vṛndāvana kavirāja was any better than the present one in Bombay, Prabhupāda replied, "Better or worse, some husband must be there."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa then offered a new argument. As long as Prabhupāda was in Bombay waiting for the opening, he said, then he would have a reason for living. But if he returned to Vṛndāvana, it would mean he was going there to die. So on that basis, Prabhupāda should remain in Bombay, since it would help give him motivation to live. Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled and said, "That is sentiment."

Now that Prabhupāda sounded so convinced, there was no alternative. There was no question of the devotees controlling him; only Kṛṣṇa could. Some of the alternatives had been frightening, and certainly the idea of voting about Prabhupāda had been. Now some of the devotees laughed nervously, relieved to hear Prabhupāda's final decision.

"Vṛndāvana," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Let's go."

"Yes, Prabhupāda," said Surabhi.

"But Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "what will happen to all the devotees here? They have been serving you so sincerely. How will they be able to open the temple without you being here? I mean, all the devotees, when they hear you are going to Vṛndāvana, they will all want to come. They won't want to stay here. Then they will all want to leave their posts and come with you to Vṛndāvana."

"Yes, then let them come," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I have no objection." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa mentioned that if a thousand devotees might come to be with Prabhupāda, that would slow down the ISKCON work all over the world. Prabhupāda again said he had no objection. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked whether it was compulsory for the G.B.C. members to come, and Prabhupāda affirmed that it was.

There were no more questions, and the devotees excused themselves to go and make immediate preparations for Prabhupāda's moving to Vṛndāvana. Only Kulādri remained in the room with Prabhupāda.

"So, Kulādri," asked Prabhupāda, "what do you think?" Kulādri had been disturbed by the fact that some of the devotees had seemed to be opposing Prabhupāda's desire and even arguing against him.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "I don't really understand. How can they give you advice like that? I feel like an intruder. I shouldn't even be here. But it seems to me that you are waiting for Kṛṣṇa to make some decision on whether you stay or go."

"What?" Prabhupāda asked.

"It seems you are waiting for Kṛṣṇa's decision," said Kulādri. "If you are going to wait for Kṛṣṇa's decision, that might as well be in Vṛndāvana." Prabhupāda smiled and closed his eyes. "Yes," he said, "that is very good advice."

SPL 54: At Home in Vrindavana

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

At Home in Vṛndāvana

Prabhupāda traveled by train from Bombay to Mathurā. Brahmānanda carried him in his arms from the train to a waiting car, and within fifteen to twenty-five minutes Prabhupāda was back in Vṛndāvana.

The devotees at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir were upset to see that Prabhupāda's condition had deteriorated so much in the one month he had been away. His room was as he had left it, except for the addition of a large double bed. He lay down, and they closed the curtains and dimmed the lights. For about five minutes he lay still, with his eyes closed.

"Now you are home, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

Still Śrīla Prabhupāda lay quietly, not moving. Then slowly he brought his hands to his chest, clasped them together, and said, "Thank you." He seemed relieved.

"Now you are in the care of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled and nodded slightly. "Yes," he said. "Kṛṣṇa tvadiya-pada-pankaja-panjarāntam," indicating King Kulaśekhara's prayer to Lord Kṛṣṇa: "My dear Kṛṣṇa, please help me die immediately so that the swan of my mind may be encircled by the stem of Your lotus feet. Otherwise, at the time of my final breath, how will it be possible for me to think of You?"

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda was in a precarious state, he remained completely fixed in thought of Kṛṣṇa in one way or another—Kṛṣṇa's name, His form, His pastimes, or His devotional service.

Prabhupāda suggested going to see Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma at nine-thirty, just as he had done before, but his servants advised that he rest today and begin that program tomorrow. "Whatever you desire, I will do," Prabhupāda said.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked Prabhupāda if he wanted the kavirāja to come.

"As you said, Prabhupāda, for better or worse, some husband must be there."

Śrīla Prabhupāda nodded. "Now manage everything," he said, "and let me think of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma."

A little before four in the afternoon, while devotees were reading aloud from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Prabhupāda asked if the temple bell had rung the hour. Ever since the temple opening in 1975, he had insisted that the bell at the front gate be rung every hour to signify the hour and once every half hour. At first, the temple president had been unable to get a watchman who would remain awake through the night and ring the bell regularly. But Śrīla Prabhupāda had insisted so strongly that the temple management had finally established the bell-ringing. For Śrīla Prabhupāda, it was more than just a good standard; it was a symbol of the entire temple management's effectiveness. If they couldn't even arrange that the bell be rung regularly, then how could they manage everything else? Now Śrīla Prabhupāda was saying he thought he heard the bell ring at the wrong time. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa explained it might have been a different bell, and the devotees continued reading Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. But Śrīla Prabhupāda again asked about the bell in the temple dome. As Hari-śauri rose to go out and check, the bell began loudly ringing— one... two... three... four—properly sounding the hour.

"That is my concern," said Prabhupāda, "that such a huge establishment is properly managed. If not properly managed, then everything will be finished."

"I don't think that that's going to happen," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "We are too much indebted to you to allow what you have established to become spoiled."

"Please see to that," said Prabhupāda.

Nevertheless, Śrīla Prabhupāda called for Akṣayānanda Swami and, as soon as he came into the room, inquired from him, "Will the bell ring or not?" Akṣayānanda promised to diligently see to it, taking the instruction very seriously, as perhaps his last order from his spiritual master.

The pūjārī entered and gave Prabhupāda a large, fragrant tulasī garland from Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Prabhupāda returned to listening to the reading.

Later in the day, he confided to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa about the past few weeks. "I must thank you," he said, "that you took me to London and again brought me here without any difficulty. That is a great credit for you. For that I am thanking you. In this condition, a bundle of bones—still you did it. Kṛṣṇa will bless you."

Hari-śauri had obtained another detailed astrological chart on Śrīla Prabhupāda from Delhi. This astrologer recommended a mantra to Lord Śiva to be chanted by ten brāhmaṇas for twenty-one days.

"We have the mahā-mantra," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "There is no need of others." He spoke disapprovingly of the suggestion.

"Are these astrological charts very much applicable for devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda?" asked Hari-śauri.

"No," said Prabhupāda. "Don't waste money for this astrology."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's faith was only in kīrtana. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa suggested they again have continuous kīrtana, and Prabhupāda said, "That is real business. These astrologers are karmīs. We have nothing to do with the karmīs."

* * *

In response to Śrīla Prabhupāda's call, the twenty-three G.B.C. members again began gathering in Vṛndāvana. They arrived heavy-hearted, yet on coming before Śrīla Prabhupāda they were pleased to give him progress reports on their preaching on his behalf. Śrīla Prabhupāda was happy to hear the reports and was as encouraging as ever to his leaders, despite his condition.

Hamsadūta Swami was one of the first to arrive, from Sri Lanka. Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed him to develop farm projects there, as Kīrtanānanda Swami had done in New Vrindaban. "Sometimes when preaching," said Hamsadūta, "I tell them, 'What kind of country is this? The land is of the rājarṣis, and some lady is running the government!'"

"Do not touch politics," Prabhupāda warned. "We are cultural and philosophy."

Prabhupāda began dealing with Girirāja over bank matters. The local Vṛndāvana bank was reluctant to allow a withdrawal from an ISKCON fund, and Śrīla Prabhupāda had to be called in for advice. He gave keen, practical strategy for solving the problem, but he asked to be spared these things in the future. Devotees in the room were amazed to see Prabhupāda still dealing expertly with such affairs. When Girirāja apologized to Prabhupāda for involving him, Prabhupāda replied, "Therefore I said, do the needful."

Actually, Prabhupāda's calling the G.B.C. men together had been so they could chant for him. Now, more than ever, he wanted the medicine of the holy name, not of the doctors. When he heard that his friend Dr. Ghosh was coming to Vṛndāvana to open a clinic and that he could prescribe treatment, he refused the offer. "These doctors will come and give something to try and save," he said. "I don't want to be saved. Dr. Ghosh may come for the clinic he wants to develop, but not for my treatment." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked if they could at least call in some local Vṛndāvana doctors.

"No," said Prabhupāda. "Let us take your advice for kīrtana only." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa agreed that kīrtana was best, because in that way they were pleading for Kṛṣṇa's help.

"Better you don't pray to Kṛṣṇa to save me," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Let me die now." Prabhupāda then asked to sit up. "If Hamsadūta is not tired," he said, "he can continue singing."

When Harikeśa had received the call to come immediately to Vṛndāvana, he had been told to "expect the worst." Immediately he contacted his printer, who was in the process of completing several books, and told him that he must have advance copies by the next day. So by the time he got on the plane for India, he had newly printed volumes of the Second Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in German, the Kṛṣṇa trilogy in German, and a Yugoslavian Śrī Īsopaniṣad. But when he arrived at Śrīla Prabhupāda's door in Vṛndāvana, a devotee told him he could not bring the books to Śrīla Prabhupāda now. "Why not?" Harikeśa asked.

"This is not the kind of mood we are trying to create here," the devotee explained.

"What? Are you crazy?" exclaimed Harikeśa. "Books are Prabhupāda's life and soul!" He went in and showed Prabhupāda the seven new books. Immediately Prabhupāda took the first volume of the Kṛṣṇa trilogy and held it up, looking at the cover painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda began crying and reached out, trying to stroke Harikeśa's head. Harikeśa reached out and held Śrīla Prabhupāda's hand, thinking himself unworthy of being patted.

"He was rotting here, typewriting," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, referring to when Harikeśa had been his secretary, just before going to preach in Europe. "I said, 'You go.' I had ten servants. You thought that I was degrading you by sending you away. No. Now you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," said Harikeśa, sobbing.

"Here is an intelligent boy, I thought," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Why should he rot here, typewriting?" Prabhupāda looked at each book. "Printing and everything is first class," he said. He asked how many had been printed, and Harikeśa replied, "One hundred twenty thousand Kṛṣṇa trilogies, sixty thousand Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Second Cantos, and ten thousand Īsopaniṣads."

"Can you distribute that Īsopaniṣad?" Prabhupāda asked. Harikeśa assured him that they could definitely distribute the book in Yugoslavia.

"Then print more," said Prabhupāda. They continued discussing book production. Books were indeed Śrīla Prabhupāda's life and soul. From Harikeśa's entering with the new books, Prabhupāda had felt a profound ecstasy that had spread to Harikeśa and all the devotees present. Everyone was keenly aware that what they were experiencing was transcendental, a special reciprocation with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and as long as they were sincere it would not die.

"Now you just have to become better," said Harikeśa. "More healthy."

"Healthy?" said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I have nothing to do with this body."

During one of the long kīrtana vigils, Brahmānanda Swami was present, and Śrīla Prabhupāda called him forward. He wanted to give him last instructions about Africa. Prabhupāda was lying down, and Brahmānanda had to put his ear near Śrīla Prabhupāda's mouth to hear. The other devotees in the room also hushed and came as close as possible.

"With Nava-yogendra," Prabhupāda said in a hoarse whisper, "the both of you. South Africa also. There gradually the people are taking. Try to bring Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa back. He is very competent. So jointly organize Africa. Have saṅkīrtana. All Europeans, Americans, Africans. Tulasī dāsa is very competent also. United Nations under Caitanya Mahāprabhu's flag. It is possible. Otherwise, that United Nations will be simply false attempt."

"You said that when you first came to New York," replied Brahmānanda, urgently recalling his first days with Śrīla Prabhupāda, "you went to the United Nations. The very first day I came to the kīrtana there in New York. The next day you went for that peace vigil outside the United Nations, and you were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and saying that this Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the only method for making United Nations."

"That is a fact," said Prabhupāda. "Try for the protection of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and things will be successful. Others, they will simply waste time and be disappointed and change the body and suffer." Prabhupāda changed the subject, but Brahmānanda was satisfied. He had been given enough service for many lifetimes.

Kulādri came into the room on behalf of Kīrtanānanda Swami, with gifts for Śrīla Prabhupāda: an \$8,000 check, a sapphire ring, a gold medallion studded with sapphires and rubies.

"So, why don't you find out some bride?" Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked, and the devotees' sudden laughter broke the room's solemn mood. Accepting the ring on his finger, Śrīla Prabhupāda said someone should take care of the other valuables.

Kulādri said he had also one request to make on behalf of Kīrtanānanda Swami: "Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja said that you have asked us to pray to Kṛṣṇa before. But he says he doesn't feel qualified to pray to Kṛṣṇa. So he is asking that you please pray to Kṛṣṇa for us, because we cannot pray to Kṛṣṇa directly. We don't know Kṛṣṇa. But if you ask, Kṛṣṇa must be sure to fulfill your desire. So would you please pray to Kṛṣṇa to stay with us? We want you to come to the palace that we're building in New Vrindaban, Śrīla Prabhupāda, if it is possible."

"I wish," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "But unless I become a little strong, how can I go?"

"We've also brought some sweets and ice cream," said Kulādri. He knew that Prabhupāda could not take it, but he asked if he could just at least take a little taste. Prabhupāda agreed, and a small piece of the ice cream was put on his tongue. "First class," he said.

Later Kīrtanānanda arrived, and Prabhupāda asked for a report on New Vrindaban.

"Everything is going very nicely, Prabhupāda," said Kīrtanānanda. "Your palace is almost finished. Already many people are coming every day to see it. It will be finished in a couple of months. The

other day a lady went in, and she turned to one of her boys and said, "I cannot tell you what I am feeling. It is so wonderful."

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. "It is wonderful in that quarter." He paused, reflecting. "Hmm... Let us see which palace I am going to."

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Kīrtanānanda to take back his valuable gifts and use them for New Vrindaban. "You require money," said Prabhupāda, "so you take back and utilize it there. That is my request."

"Thank you very much," said Kīrtanānanda. "Most of all we want you, though."

"Yes, I also," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "And if I survive, I have a strong desire to go where you are and live there. It will be a great pleasure."

Kīrtanānanda had pictures of the palace, and Prabhupāda sat up to see them. "You are fulfilling my dream," he said. "New Vrindaban. I dreamt all these things. Wonderful things he has done. He is the first student—from the very beginning. When I was in the storefront, he was bringing carpets, bench, some gong, some lamps."

In Vṛndāvana, Girirāja had seen Prabhupāda a number of times, mostly on business. He also regularly took his turn in the kīrtana vigils in Prabhupāda's room. But one day, wanting to take full advantage of Vṛndāvana, he went to visit some of the temples. At the end of the day he took rest for the night on the roof of the gurukula building. But in the middle of the night he was awakened by a devotee saying that Prabhupāda wanted to see him. He ran down immediately, aware that Prabhupāda might pass away at any moment. Anything Prabhupāda might say could be his last words. He came into Prabhupāda's room, offered obeisances, and got up very close beside the bed.

"Do you think this movement can go on without me?" Prabhupāda asked. Girirāja was astounded that Prabhupāda had called him in the middle of the night to ask him this.

"I think," said Girirāja, "that as long as we are sincere and go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and follow the principles, the movement will be successful."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was silent. When he spoke, each word seemed to come with great effort. He uttered the word organization. Then he said, "Organization and intelligence. Is there anything else?"

Girirāja felt within his heart that he wanted to cry out, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, stay with us." But instead he said, "No."

"All right," Prabhupāda said. And Girirāja offered obeisances and left. Outside Prabhupāda's room, Girirāja continued to reflect on Prabhupāda's words—"organization and intelligence." Prabhupāda seemed to be demanding much more love and commitment; not that ISKCON could survive on organization and intelligence alone. Girirāja was thinking that perhaps these might be the last words Prabhupāda would ever speak to him.

Paramānanda, the temple president of Prabhupāda's Pennsylvania farm project, Gītā-nagarī, also came to be with Prabhupāda. "So organize this farm project," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Simple living. Human life is meant for God realization. Try to help them."

"We're always feeling your presence very strongly, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Paramānanda. "Simply by your teachings and instructions. We are always meditating on your instructions."

"Thank you," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "That is the real presence. Physical presence is not important." Paramānanda had brought a letter from his wife, Satyabhāmā. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked if he should read it, and Prabhupāda agreed. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa read on.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most humble obeisances. All glories to Your Divine Grace.

This shawl is made of the wool from our own sheep. It is spun and woven here at Gītā-nagari. It is the first piece we have made. While I was working on it I would always think of you, how I was supposedly making you a gift. But actually you are giving me the gift of engagement in devotional service. Śrīla Prabhupāda, I always pray to Lord Nṛshimhadeva to protect you and allow you to stay with us to finish your books. But I think today the rain falling from the sky is actually the tears of the demigods, crying at the prospect of your departure. I am also crying. Even Kṛṣṇa cried at the passing of Grandfather Bhisma. So I have a right to cry. I cannot be so philosophical to say that you are always present in your books and teachings, though I know these things are true. I will miss you so much, Śrīla Prabhupāda, if you go. I beg that I may always remain your menial servant and devotee

Your humble disciple,

Satyabhama dasi

"Thank her," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he reached for the shawl. "Made with our wool."

"So you'll take rest now, Śrīla Prabhupāda?" suggested Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

"Umhm," said Prabhupāda. "This can be on the foot." And he gestured that the saffron-colored shawl be put as a blanket on his bed. Tears came from his eyes as he lay back.

* * *

Śrīla Prabhupāda was becoming more and more in favor of departing from the world. When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa remarked that Prabhupāda was not drinking much, he replied that he had no inclination.

"I don't know what to say, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "It's certainly bewildering. I can only expect somehow Kṛṣṇa will have to do something." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa requested again that they

bring a doctor. "Still some husband must be there, you said," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa reminded. "We should have a doctor's help. I still believe that. After all, we are not doctors."

"No," said Prabhupāda, "but we are already taking help of doctor, Āyur Veda—that is Yogendra-Ras."

"You're just beginning that now, of course," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "Tomorrow you might give it up. Then what will be our position?"

"Widow," said Prabhupāda with a laugh. Then he added, "Actually, Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate husband."

The devotees with Prabhupāda found it very difficult to adopt his mood of looking forward to his passing away. Once during a kīrtana, Upendra asked if Prabhupāda wanted something to drink. When Prabhupāda refused, some of the devotees began to cry, thinking that if Prabhupāda didn't eat or even drink, he would not remain with them much longer. The devotees were trying to be submissively resigned to Prabhupāda's will, and they accepted that his direction was more and more toward leaving. They were coming to accept it, surrounding him with kīrtana and not causing him any inconvenience with their problems or demands. Whatever he wanted, they should want. But the idea of his passing away was still almost unbearable.

In their resignation, the devotees became philosophical. Rūpānuga said Prabhupāda could be likened to an ambassador in a foreign country. He may have many affairs in the foreign country, but finally he's called back. Jayādvaita said that Prabhupāda had taught his disciples everything and that now he was teaching them how to die. Another devotee said that Prabhupāda had better friends in the spiritual world. In their talks, the devotees stressed the importance of their cooperating with one another, and they discussed how ISKCON would continue in the future. But it was all depressing.

Nevertheless, they kept returning to the unpleasant but unavoidable realization that Prabhupāda would very soon leave them. With Prabhupāda so clearly indicating that he had decided to definitely leave, the devotees were becoming despondent. At best, a solemn mood prevailed.

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda said they should consult Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, a disciple of Prabhupāda's sannyāsa-guru, for details on how to conduct the ceremony for a departed Vaiṣṇava. He also described where his samādhi should be located and asked that after his departure, a feast be served in all the main temples in Vṛndāvana, with ISKCON bearing the expense. On one level, everything seemed to go on as usual. The October weather was very pleasant. The gurukula boys were continuing with their routine, and the Deity worship went on as usual. But in front of the temple, workmen began clearing a space for Prabhupāda's samādhi.

After several days of Prabhupāda's not eating or drinking, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa tried again, but gently. "You don't want to drink anything today?"

"Let me drink hari-nāma amīya vilāsa,*" said Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Hari-śauri. "Hari-nāma is the sweetest nectar."

“Nivṛta-tarṣair upagīyamānam bhavauśadhāt,**” Prabhupāda quoted. “This is bhavauśadha, hari-kīrtana.”

Jayādvaita completed the verse: “Bhavauśadhāc chotra-mano 'bhirāmāt.”

“Ah,” Prabhupāda acknowledged. “And caraṇāmṛta—diet. Diet and medicine. Let me depend on these.”

Although he was fasting, Śrīla Prabhupāda inquired about the prasādam being served to the devotees. Now a hundred or more extra devotees were at the temple, and more were expected.

“This time, what do they supply?” asked Prabhupāda.

“What they supply?” said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. “You mean prasāda? Of course, today is the day after Ekādaśī, so they had some cereal made with gur and some fruit salad made with guavas and bananas. That was all this morning. Lunch is usually substantial, very good. This is the best prasādam that we have had in many years in India. The cook, Ayodhyāpati, is doing very nicely. Do you want to know what he cooks for lunch?”

Prabhupāda nodded slightly.

“He cooks an ālu-sabji with dāl sauce,” Tamāla Kṛṣṇa continued, “and he makes bindi, very nicely spiced, and dāl, rotī, rice, apple chutney, and dahi-raitā every day.”

Prabhupāda asked who assisted Ayodhyāpati. He didn't want any hired cooks.

“Only devotees are cooking,” said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. “And it is very tasteful. And everybody—about 125 devotees—sits together and takes prasādam. And the guests from the guesthouse also take. Everyone takes together.”

“Everybody liked?” asked Prabhupāda, smiling.

“Yes, oh, yes,” was the combined reply of the devotees in the room. They all crowded close around Prabhupāda's bed.

“That's nice,” said Prabhupāda.

“You are the perfect father, Śrīla Prabhupāda,” said one of the devotees. “You provide everything for us. A place to live, food to eat, everything. And you've trained us in spiritual knowledge.”

Prabhupāda uttered one of his deep sounds—“Hmmm.” Then he said, “Chant. All together,” and the assembled devotees gladly began a kīrtana.

The room was very dark except for a nightlight behind the head of Śrīla Prabhupāda's bed. Devotees were chanting softly, using only the one tiny pair of karatālas for keeping rhythm.

Tripurāri Swami was massaging Śrīla Prabhupāda's feet, Bhagatjī his right leg, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa his left arm. Suddenly, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, from the Devananda Sarasvatī Math in Mathurā, entered along with two of his men. Prabhupāda's disciples immediately gave him a seat at the side of the bed. Śrīla Prabhupāda began speaking, but so softly that Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja had to lean over to hear. Seeing a conversation about to begin, the devotees in the room, numbering about fifteen or twenty, moved in closer.

Śrīla Prabhupāda began, “Śrīla Prabhupāda [Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī] said that we should preach in Europe, America. That was his desire. And his other desire was that we all would work together jointly to preach.”

“Yes, that is right,” said Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja.

“I didn't waste a single moment,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “I tried my best, and it has been successful to some extent.” Śrīla Prabhupāda's voice was choked with emotion. “If we work conjointly,” he continued, “then as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *prthivīte**... Saṅkīrtana has great possibilities. My life is coming to an end. It is my desire that you all forgive me for my mistakes. My Godbrothers, when you are preaching at times there are some disputes, some misunderstandings. Maybe I also committed some offenses like that. Please ask them to forgive me. When I am gone, you will all sit together and decide how you can manage for some utsava, or festival for me. How much should we pay? What do you think of this?”

“Whatever instructions you give me,” said Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, “I will follow them with absolute sincerity. I consider you my guru.”

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said that what Śrīla Prabhupāda had created should be protected, and it was everyone's duty to do so. He pledged to help in whatever way he could. Śrīla Prabhupāda inquired if his Godbrothers who had temples in Mathura-Vṛndāvana were present, and Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja replied that most of them were out of station.

Regarding Śrīla Prabhupāda's asking his Godbrothers for forgiveness, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said, “They are all trivial things. In this worldwide preaching, if some little things go wrong here and there, what difference does it make? It is all right. Whatever you have done, you have done for the well-being of the entire human society. There is no individual interest. Everything was done in the interest of God.” He advised that Śrīla Prabhupāda not worry. His disciples were worthy and would maintain things; therefore Prabhupāda should now simply “think of the Lord.”

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja then asked his assistant, Śeṣaśāyī Brahmācārī, to sing Śrī-rūpa-mañjarī-pada. While everyone listened in silence and Śrīla Prabhupāda lay still, Śeṣaśāyī Brahmācārī sang the song very sweetly. Next, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja sang a bhajana, finishing with the refrain *Jaya Gurudeva! Jaya Prabhupāda!*

After a pause, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja spoke again, this time referring to Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples. “They should be told that they should never get motivated by their own self-interest,” he said. “They should make your mission successful.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda turned his head slowly, looking over the devotees as they gathered in even more closely. Then slowly he lifted his hand, as if to call them all to attention, and said, "Do not fight among yourselves. I have given direction in my books." He then lowered his hand.

Prabhupāda's Godbrother Indupati entered the room. Śrīla Prabhupāda heard his greeting and repeated his request: "First of all I want to say forgive me for all my offenses. I didn't want to hurt anyone, but while preaching one has to sometimes say something that may offend others. Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, yes," Indupati said.

"Mahārāja, you didn't commit any offense," said Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. "We never thought that you did anything wrong. On the other hand, you bless us. We need it. You never did any wrong. If someone is offended by your actions, that is his fault."

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja then gently took Śrīla Prabhupāda's right hand and felt his pulse. After a moment or two he said, "Pulse is all right. And your consciousness is perfect. If you have to go, by the will of the Lord, then you will go perfectly." Promising to return again, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja asked permission to leave, and he and Indupati and their party left the room.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples moved back and remained silent, not wanting to instigate any conversation to unnecessarily tax Prabhupāda. They appreciated Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's words, but it was another final goodbye. Before the atmosphere of despair could engulf them, they began again their soft, singing kīrtana.

Early one morning in October, as Śrīla Prabhupāda continued fasting from food and drink, Upendra made an innocent but somewhat impertinent complaint. "How can you refuse to drink?" he asked.

"What is wrong if I don't drink?" Śrīla Prabhupāda replied. "I feel no inconvenience." Upendra added that if Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't drink, his body would become dehydrated. Prabhupāda made no reply, and Upendra left the room.

"What about water?" Abhirāma asked.

Śrīla Prabhupāda thought for a moment and said, "So you discuss among yourselves and decide what you want me to do."

Discuss? He seemed to be speaking of more than the merits of drinking water. "Discuss about recovery?" asked Abhirāma.

"I don't want," said Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"You say you don't want recovery, Śrīla Prabhupāda?"

"Yes," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. Abhirāma then went to the outer room, the secretary's reception room, where some of the G.B.C. men were sitting together. He dutifully mentioned what Śrīla Prabhupāda had just said—to discuss among themselves about his recovery. But Abhirāma's remark didn't seem like news. The devotees were already well aware that Prabhupāda was making almost no attempt to carry on. They were signed to it. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to leave now, to "die peacefully." They had been trying to encourage him to drink, but now he was determined to simply fast until the right time came. Whether they could accept it or not, it was happening. Therefore Abhirāma's comment provoked no formal discussion.

That afternoon Prabhupāda called for Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, who was at that time taking his lunch. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa responded at once and entered the room along with several other G.B.C. men. They all came very close to hear what Prabhupāda wanted to say.

"If I want to survive," he said, "of course I'll have to take something." His words came slowly, but with difficulty. "It is not possible to survive without taking any food. But my survival means so many inconveniences, one after another. Therefore I have decided to die peacefully." His voice trailed off, and everyone was too stunned to speak. They sat looking almost blankly at him as he lay with his eyes closed. He occasionally made a noise like "ummm," and only after several very long minutes did Tamāla Kṛṣṇa manage to ask Prabhupāda if they should continue with the kīrtana. By this time, more devotees, having finished lunch, were entering the room, and they began softly singing kīrtana. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa leaned forward and assured Prabhupāda about the stipend payments for his former family. Prabhupāda acknowledged.

"Don't worry," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. "I'll see that each of them is satisfied. They won't feel sorry in any way. You've provided for everyone, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

After a few minutes, Prabhupāda turned his attention to Hari-śauri, who was sobbing silently near Prabhupāda's head. With some sternness in his voice, Prabhupāda asked, "Why do you want me to survive?" Hari-śauri could not speak. He felt that if he asked Prabhupāda to stay it would be an offense, since he had already decided to leave. Hari-śauri could not keep his emotions in check, and yet he did not want to say, "Stay and struggle." Neither did he nor any of the others want Prabhupāda to leave. Somehow, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had not caught Prabhupāda's last remark to Hari-śauri, and so he leaned forward towards Prabhupāda, half questioning, "They want you to survive?"

"If I want to die," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "this is a very peaceful death. You go on chanting."

As the kīrtana continued, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa asked to be excused. Prabhupāda asked why, and he replied he was going for discussion.

"For discussion," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "They want me to survive, and I want to die peacefully. I cannot make miracles. The physical body has to be maintained if I am to survive. But without taking food, how the physical body will go on? That is fanaticism."

"Everything is in the hands of Kṛṣṇa," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's eyes had been closed, but suddenly he opened them and said, "Kṛṣṇa wants me to do as I like. The choice is mine. Kṛṣṇa has given me full freedom."

These words struck some of the devotees as extremely startling and different. But Brahmānanda spoke up in the mood of resigned assurance. "It doesn't matter whether you live or die, Prabhupāda," he said. "You'll always be with Kṛṣṇa, and we will always be with you, because we will follow your instructions."

"Whether I live or die," Prabhupāda said, "I will always be Kṛṣṇa's servant. So if Brahmānanda has assured me that this movement will go on, then better let me die peacefully." The devotees, who were only inches away from Prabhupāda, heard these faint words with dismay. After a few minutes of heavy silence, they resumed the kīrtana. Prabhupāda seemed to rest.

Within a few minutes all the available G.B.C. men and senior sannyāsīs were gathered in the outer room. Brahmānanda was feeling very low that he had told Prabhupāda that everything would go on without him and that Prabhupāda had replied that he would therefore die. The devotees remained amazed at Prabhupāda's statement that Kṛṣṇa had given him freedom to do as he liked. These words now struck like a thunderbolt. With these words, "Kṛṣṇa has given me the choice," Prabhupāda turned all the devotees' minds in a different direction. Abhirāma reminded them that Prabhupāda wanted them to discuss about his recovery, and now they were having that discussion. But they were confused and bewildered by the sudden change in Prabhupāda's mood.

Kīrtanānanda Swami, the seniormost disciple, spoke up with clarity and logic. "If Kṛṣṇa has given Śrīla Prabhupāda the independence to choose, that means He also has given us the independence. So we should assert our independence and ask Śrīla Prabhupāda to stay."

One by one, devotees spoke up in support of the decision to ask Śrīla Prabhupāda to stay. Yes, it was a fact that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would go on without Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical presence; but it wouldn't be the same.

"Yes, and Prabhupāda hasn't finished translating the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam," said Brahmānanda.

"Yes," said another, "we should ask Śrīla Prabhupāda to stay for at least five or ten years."

"Five or ten years? We should ask him to stay for one hundred years!" "But not all of the G.B.C. members are here to decide."

"Well, who in the G.B.C. is going to say that we shouldn't ask Prabhupāda to stay?"

They were in agreement. They did want Prabhupāda to stay, and they should express their desire to him. The mood of the last few days had suddenly reversed. They were no longer in the depths of despair but were thinking positively and enthusiastically that Śrīla Prabhupāda would stay with them.

"Why should we think that there is no hope for him to become fit again?" said Kīrtanānanda. "Jesus could bring people back to life from the dead, and even mundane yogīs can do it. So Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly can if he wants."

Now Brahmānanda spoke up with great strength. "We weren't realizing that actually we need Prabhupāda! That should be the understanding. There is no question of allowing Prabhupāda out of our presence for a moment!"

It was about 3:30 P.M. when the twenty devotees entered Śrīla Prabhupāda's room and crowded around his bed. Śrīla Prabhupāda lay with his eyes closed, motionless, but alert to their presence. Kīrtanānanda Swami had been chosen to be the spokesman, and as he leaned over to speak to Śrīla Prabhupāda, his lips began to tremble, his eyes filled with tears, and he broke down, sobbing, with his head at the side of the bed. Śrīla Prabhupāda reached out but could not find Kīrtanānanda.

"Who?" said Prabhupāda.

Many voices spoke, "Kīrtanānanda."

Śrīla Prabhupāda then laid his hand on Kīrtanānanda's head and gently rubbed it.

"Hmmm? So what do you want?" he asked. No one could say anything, as they were all waiting for Kīrtanānanda. Brahmānanda was rubbing Kīrtanānanda on the back to soothe him, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was encouraging him to try to say something. Finally, after another minute of emotional waiting, Kīrtanānanda raised his head. He looked at Śrīla Prabhupāda and pleaded, "If Kṛṣṇa gives you the choice, then don't go! We need you!"

"So this is your joint opinion?" asked Śrīla Prabhupāda. "You have discussed?" He held his hand in the air and moved it around, so as to indicate all the devotees.

Brahmānanda Swami spoke up very emotionally but positively: "We have all met together, Śrīla Prabhupāda. We want you to remain and lead this movement and finish the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. We said that you must remain for at least another ten years. You have only done fifty percent of your work."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was listening very carefully without any movement, but when Brahmānanda said "fifty percent" he frowned and said, "No." Finally he uttered a "Hmmm." He was considering the proposal. His eyes were still closed, and he seemed to be consulting Kṛṣṇa from within himself. Several times he uttered "Hmmm," and everyone was held in suspense, not able to speak or think or do anything except look intently at Śrīla Prabhupāda. Then with his eyes still closed, he yawned, and his gold teeth began to show. "All right," he said.

It was probably the most casual-sounding decision on life or death ever made. At that moment the devotees understood Śrīla Prabhupāda's independent position; he could stay or go as he chose. They had become so faithless, however, that they were thinking that his passing away was inevitable and could not possibly be delayed, even by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself. Now he displayed his wonderful transcendental nature with a simple yawn—"All right"—as if choosing between life

and death was the most unimportant thing in the world. Harikeśa gave a short laugh, the kind that he saved for when Śrīla Prabhupāda did something completely transcendental, incomprehensible, and inimitable. "Jaya, Prabhupāda!" he said.

Prabhupāda had again proven himself to be beyond understanding. The devotees laughed nervously, unsure what was appropriate. Not knowing whether to laugh or cry, they fell silent again to see what Prabhupāda would do.

"So give me something to drink," he said, and all the devotees shouted, "Jaya, Prabhupāda!" He would stay with them. It was confirmed. Everyone was greatly relieved. "All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda!"

"This is real affection" Prabhupāda replied.

The atmosphere had changed. Śrīla Prabhupāda had changed. His servants lifted him up, and all the devotees watched as he drank a full glass of grape juice. Now, instead of withdrawing his energy, as he had done steadily for the last few days, he came back to life again. Then he lay back. "Thank you very much," he said. "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

And the devotees replied, "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

So this was what Prabhupāda wanted. He was drawing out their emotions and increasing their affection for him more and more by putting them into a state of transcendental distress. Now they could understand, at least to a tiny degree, what the gopīs' pangs of separation were like. Śrīla Prabhupāda was bringing his disciples to the extremes of devotional sentiments and showing that actually their lives were in his hands.

After a long pause he asked, "Strawberries, they have been brought?"

"Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "very nice strawberries."

"I will take some strawberries," he said.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said, "you gave your word to Kṛṣṇa in Bombay that you would see Him sitting in His new big temple, and you have yet to keep your word to Him." Prabhupāda smiled very brightly.

"You have fixed the date for the opening of Bombay," said Brahmānanda. "January the first. So we would like to invite you to come, Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is your temple. You have asked Kṛṣṇa to come there. When we all gave up, you carried on the fight."

"Yes, that was a great fight," said Prabhupāda, smiling. "After so much fighting and then to construct a big temple is a great triumph."

"I don't think Kṛṣṇa will come into the temple," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "unless you are personally there, Śrīla Prabhupāda, to open the door."

Prabhupāda was still smiling. "All right," he said. "But chanting should not be stopped. Things should go on naturally."

Turning to Kīrtanānanda, Prabhupāda asked, "Kīrtanānanda's palace —when it will be ready?"

"In early spring," Kīrtanānanda replied, "as soon as the weather is a little warmer. It gives you the chance to have a little time to recuperate, then go to Bombay and open the temple there, and then you can come open your palace. We have about seventy-five letters from all the devotees in New Vrindaban, and they are all begging you to come. They say their life is finished if you don't come."

"So let me take a little rest," said Prabhupāda, "and then I shall take strawberries."

Later that day, Śrīla Prabhupāda was speaking more audibly and quoting verses, including the Īṣopaniṣad verse that says one who acknowledges the Supreme Personality of Godhead can go on living for hundreds of years. He sat up and drank some vegetable broth. He also talked for half an hour with Girirāja about bank matters, repeatedly questioning him to make sure he understood. He also spoke at length with Rāmeśvara Swami about preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Iran.

Word spread quickly to the devotees throughout the world that Prabhupāda had decided to live. Especially in Vṛndāvana, where gloom had pervaded, the devotees were now light-hearted and thankful. They spoke more enthusiastically about preaching. All the devotees in Vṛndāvana agreed that everything Śrīla Prabhupāda had been doing was for instructing his disciples. Previously there had been discussion of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teaching them how to die, but now there was more awareness that he was teaching them how to live—by love. He was doing this by increasing their love for him.

Some of the devotees felt that the instruction Śrīla Prabhupāda was giving now was his ultimate instruction, the motive for everything he did. The basis for Kṛṣṇa consciousness was, in fact, love. Śrīla Prabhupāda had written in his books, *prema pum-ārtho mahān*: "Love of Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate goal of life." Only when a devotee developed pure, unalloyed love for Kṛṣṇa could he go to the spiritual world. Some of the devotees said that to bring all the devotees to a higher, purer love, Prabhupāda was remaining in the material world and offering his disciples the opportunity to serve him very intimately in Vṛndāvana. Other devotees, however, considered Śrīla Prabhupāda's activities too grave for them to understand and simply accepted these pastimes as *acintya*, inconceivable. But everyone could at least understand, either by witnessing or hearing reports, that Śrīla Prabhupāda had responded to his disciples' dependent cries of love by saying, "This is real affection."

SPL 55: The Final Lesson

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

The Final Lesson

Despite his promise to live, Śrīla Prabhupāda said his life was still in Kṛṣṇa's hands—everything was. His free choice did not mean he was absolutely independent. Rather, the pure devotee's attitude is to freely surrender to Kṛṣṇa, whatever happens. In the mood of the gopīs, the foremost devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu prayed, “You may handle me roughly in Your embrace or make me brokenhearted by not being present before me, but You are always my worshipable Lord, unconditionally.”

Because the exchanges between the Lord and His pure devotees are always supremely personal, both the Lord and His devotees express desires and individual will. In His childhood līlā, Kṛṣṇa sometimes breaks mother Yaśoda's butter pot, and sometimes He allows her to catch Him and bind Him. In any case, the will of the Lord and the will of the devotee are always one in interest, but they are sometimes expressed in the form of a loving conflict. Similarly, although Śrīla Prabhupāda had promised his devotees that he would stay in the world and defy death, he still remained surrendered to the will of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had already expressed his surrender in the prayer he had given his disciples to offer on his behalf: “My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You desire, please cure Śrīla Prabhupāda.” By the phrase “if You desire,” he was reminding his followers of the supreme prerogative of Kṛṣṇa and was asking them to abide by it, although he was also giving them an acceptable way to petition Kṛṣṇa. In a similar case in 1967, he had given his disciples another prayer: “My master has not finished his work.” He had said then that Kṛṣṇa had responded to this prayer, granting the wishes of the devotees. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself was responding to the devotees' prayers, and Kṛṣṇa had given him the choice. But as a surrendered soul, Śrīla Prabhupāda waited for further developments, ever sensitive to Kṛṣṇa's desire. As Prabhupāda had said when invited by Kīrtanānanda to come to his palace in New Vrindaban, “Let us see which palace I am going to.”

As a loving tension can sometimes exist between the Supreme Lord and His pure devotee, so now a similar tension existed between Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers. Prior to his disciples' desperate petition at his bedside, Śrīla Prabhupāda had seen his duty as instructing his disciples in how to die. Part of his mission was to set the perfect example in this most important lesson—how to pass life's ultimate test. But now his disciples were asking him to postpone the lesson in dying and stay with them indefinitely in the preaching field. And Prabhupāda had agreed, showing that he had the ability to live if he chose. But sooner or later he would have to return to the lesson on how a person should face the end of life.

One special feature of Śrīla Prabhupāda's activities is his relating intimately to the human condition while at the same time remaining aloof and transcendental. As a pure devotee, he was not subjected to the law of karma, which awards reactions for pious and sinful deeds. He was not born by the force of karma, nor would he die by force of karma. As stated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, “One whose body, mind, and words are fully engaged in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is a liberated soul, even while living in this world.” People often misunderstand the movements of a pure devotee within the material world, just as one, on seeing clouds blowing past the moon, may think the moon itself is moving. The śāstra, therefore, warns us never to see the guru as an ordinary man subject to karma.

But Śrīla Prabhupāda, while always transcendental to this world, showed the conditioned souls how they too could come to the stage of liberation by constantly thinking about Kṛṣṇa and serving Him, so that at the time of death they could return to Kṛṣṇa in the eternal, spiritual world. And Prabhupāda's lessons were always practical and universal. Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, for example, were not mere theory but were practical and full of realized knowledge. And Prabhupāda practiced what he preached; his entire life was exemplary. He had been in family life, and even then he had vigorously preached, by starting his Back to Godhead magazine. In poverty and obscurity he had struggled to start a spiritual movement, and by the grace of Kṛṣṇa and his spiritual master, he had become successful. He had always shown by his humanlike attempts his willingness to bravely take on austerity and face danger. He had shown exemplary spiritual life for all to try and follow. He had gone alone, in old age, to a foreign country and had chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa in a park in New York City, attracting the young men and women of America. Therefore everyone should take his example and try to serve Kṛṣṇa, despite the immediate impediments. Śrīla Prabhupāda encountered obstacles, yet by his free will and the help of Kṛṣṇa, he surmounted them. This was his wonderful example. It is said that Lord Caitanya, five hundred years ago, made surrender to Kṛṣṇa more attainable than Lord Kṛṣṇa had five thousand years ago. And now, in the twentieth century, Śrīla Prabhupāda has made Kṛṣṇa consciousness possible for people all over the world.

As part of his instruction and example, Śrīla Prabhupāda knew he would have to show people just how to die. He had escaped death a number of times—by Kṛṣṇa's grace, by the prayers of his disciples, and by his own pure and powerful will to propagate his movement. But from the signs given to him by Lord Kṛṣṇa in 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda began decisively and conclusively ending his mission in the material world. And among his final duties was his giving complete guidelines on how to die. He was perfectly showing how to do that which everyone has to do, but which is most difficult to do successfully: die.

But a loving conflict was there. Prabhupāda loved his disciples. He also knew they were not yet fully mature. His movement already had great potency and stature in the world, and yet it had many enemies. He was inclined to always protect his devotees, his movement, and all living entities, even the animals. So when his most intimate and faithful disciples pleaded that they could not go on without him, he had turned from showing how to die, agreeing to stay with them and preach. But at what point would they ever be willing to let him go? At what point could he say that the world of māyā and the enemies of Kṛṣṇa were all gone? At what point would his disciples become fully mature?

In following his decision to stay, Śrīla Prabhupāda turned himself over to his disciples, allowing them to care for him completely. Those who took part recalled that never before had Śrīla Prabhupāda allowed such intimate dealings between himself and his disciples. The only thing comparable was in New York, in 1966, when he had been very intimate in dealing with the first persons to join him, persons who had known nothing of the etiquette of approaching a spiritual master. But those who were present now and who had also been present then said that these days were even more intimate.

At one point Kīrtanānanda firmly insisted that Śrīla Prabhupāda drink a full cup of juice, even when he said he had had enough. Kīrtanānanda felt awkward, insisting. "I am not like mother Yaśodā that I can do this," he said. "I keep remembering that you are my spiritual master." But Śrīla

Prabhupāda allowed himself to be ordered by Kīrtanānanda. Similarly, Bhavānanda, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Bhakti-cāru, Upendra, and other servants coaxed Śrīla Prabhupāda to follow certain diets and cared for his body constantly. The other devotees were reminded of the story of Īśvara Purī, who gave intimate bodily service to his spiritual master, Mādhavendra Purī, when Mādhavendra was in the last stages of his life and apparently invalid. According to the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, it was by this menial, bodily service that Īśvara Purī proved his love for his spiritual master and was allowed to become the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had deferred the lessons in dying in favor of giving his disciples an unparalleled opportunity to serve him in pure and simple love. And he allowed this not only for a few, but for whoever came to Vṛndāvana. Many came, and all were allowed to enter Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, massage his body, and sit with him as long as they liked, day and night, chanting the holy name for his pleasure. Śrīla Prabhupāda also recommenced his translating, and this was done openly. Whereas previously he had always worked in solitude, he now encouraged all devotees to come as he lay in bed dictating his Bhaktivedanta purports. He was giving himself completely and declaring it also, telling the devotees present, "Never leave me," and "I cannot live without your company." They had asked him to stay, and he had agreed, consigning himself completely to their care.

Those who were blessed to have this service felt themselves passing over all barriers of reluctance to serve, as well as all barriers of material desire. By intimately serving Śrīla Prabhupāda, they felt the strength of complete surrender and sensed that this would sustain them always, even when Śrīla Prabhupāda eventually did depart from the world.

Prabhupāda also continued speaking, as he had in recent months, about being unafraid of death and being fixed in transcendental knowledge. When receiving a presentation of some of his books recently printed in Portuguese by Hṛdayānanda Goswami, Prabhupāda encouraged him and said, "This is life. The material world is just bones. The bones are not our real life. Our real concern is the living force. The bones may remain or go—it doesn't matter. The real life is sustaining the bones. There is even a history that there was a ṛṣi who had only bones. So there is a science by which you can sustain life by only bones. Hiraṇyakaśipu did it."

"You are also doing it, Śrīla Prabhupāda," Tamāla Kṛṣṇa said.

"So take care of the bones as long as possible," said Prabhupāda, "but the real life is here, always remember that. The material world means we are simply all protecting bones and flesh together. But they have no knowledge of what they are."

And when Ātreya Ṛṣi visited Śrīla Prabhupāda and asked that he visit Tehran, Prabhupāda said that he was ready to go, but "Now you have to take a bundle of bones." These were, of course, the same themes that Prabhupāda had always taught, the same themes that were in his books. But the lessons were more poignant and striking when Prabhupāda applied them to his own situation.

More than one devotee compared Prabhupāda to Bhīṣmadeva, who gave important instructions in his last days. As Bhīṣma felt no pain and delivered learned and loving discourses even from his "bed of arrows," and as Bhīṣma determined by his own will the time of his departure from the world, so Śrīla Prabhupāda spent his last days oblivious to his physical condition, defying death, and

instructing his spiritually innocent sons. But Prabhupāda's sons could no longer stand by and simply hear the philosophical lessons. Prabhupāda had accepted their affection when they had cried for him to stay with them, and now they wanted to express that affection in the only world they understood, a world with Śrīla Prabhupāda living and talking with them, laughing or reprimanding them, as he liked. They wanted him to eat and drink and become physically strong again.

But again Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed to change, and he began refusing food and drink. He had postponed his passing away to exchange lovingly with his disciples, and yet at the same time, by refusing to eat or drink, he was showing his preference for passing away. He admitted, when pressed, that it was an impossible course of action—to live without food or drink. Nor did he expect or want miracles. If he was to get better, it would be by taking nourishment. But for reasons of his own, he would not eat. He said recovery was material, and he didn't want it.

He kept closely in tune with the will of Kṛṣṇa, allowing the holy name to sustain him. The doctors who came were often puzzled, but those who were Vaiṣṇavas understood and respected his prerogative. Prabhupāda's servants made anxiety-filled attempts to induce Prabhupāda to take regular treatment. But Prabhupāda preferred to take only kīrtana and Bhāgavatam, while at the same time sustaining a willingness to live. He empathized with his disciples' anxiety and patiently explained the puzzling situation they were in. He wanted their care, and he allowed them to try and treat him, knowing that it was bringing them more and more into a surrender of love. But gradually it became more clear that Kṛṣṇa's will was indicating Prabhupāda's departure.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," Bhavānanda coaxed, always working on the assumption that Prabhupāda could stay if he wanted, "your presence on this planet is the only thing that's keeping the onslaught of the Kali-yuga from really taking effect. We have no idea even what will happen if you leave."

"It is not in my hands," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, with perfect clarity of consciousness. "Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma."

Śrīla Prabhupāda always spoke clearly, logically, and with complete devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Up until the last he dealt with practical matters, forming a Bhaktivedanta Swami Charity Trust for reconstructing ancient temples in Bengal and arranging final details regarding ISKCON properties and monies. Through all dealings he stayed always alert, and he absorbed himself in kīrtana and Bhāgavatam.

But it became obvious to his disciples that, despite his promise, he was again moving inevitably towards giving the final lesson. He was teaching that love was beyond death, that a disciple's love could call the spiritual master back to the world to stay, and that a pure devotee has the ability to stay in the world beyond his allotted time. Meanwhile, however, he was progressing steadily to the final point. The devotees didn't feel angry with him or cheated that he was doing so. He had told them that he had free will given by Kṛṣṇa. And they also, by their free will, had asked him to stay, and he had agreed. But they knew he was not obliged. If, despite their prayers, Lord Kṛṣṇa was telling Śrīla Prabhupāda that he should come back home to Godhead, what could they do but accept? If Śrīla Prabhupāda was accepting, then they would accept also. Nothing, however, could change the fact of their surrendered love; it had now become a solid pact that could not be

vanquished by any material changes. They had passed the test of eternal loving service, and that could not be taken away by death.

Up until the end there were interludes of sweetness as well as displays of Prabhupāda's indomitable mood of fighting for Kṛṣṇa. One day Prabhupāda's sister Piśimā arrived unexpectedly, and Prabhupāda asked her to cook kicharī. At that time Kīrtanānanda was trying to put Prabhupāda on the road to recovery by gradually increasing his liquids, and Kīrtanānanda and the other devotees opposed the idea of his suddenly eating solid foods. But Śrīla Prabhupāda insisted.

"It doesn't matter whether what she cooks does good to me or bad," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "She is a Vaiṣṇavī. It will be good for me." He then began speaking in an extremely humble way. "Probably I became a little puffed up because of my opulence and success," he said. "Now God has shattered that pride. If you don't have your body, what is there to be puffed up about?"

Bhakti-cāru Swami protested, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, whatever you have done, you have done for Kṛṣṇa."

"That may be, but in this world, unknowingly you commit offenses."

When Piśimā heard this, she exclaimed, "No, no, he never committed any offense."

"You cannot ever commit offenses," said Bhakti-cāru. "You are God's very dear one. How can you commit offenses?"

"I am a little temperamental," said Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I used to use words like rascal and so on. I never compromised. They used to call it 'A club in one hand and a Bhāgavatam in the other.' That is how I preach. Anyway, make arrangements for my sister."

There were also visits from Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers, and again Prabhupāda asked forgiveness for his offenses. One time, Niṣkiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī, Purī Mahārāja, Āśrama Mahārāja, Ānanda Prabhu, Puruṣottama Brahmācārī, and about twenty others came and sat next to Prabhupāda's bed. He was resting when they arrived, and they joined the kīrtana until he awoke. When he saw them, he asked to be raised up. Sitting in the center of his bed with his Godbrothers all around, he addressed them.

"All over the world there is a beautiful field to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness," he said. "I didn't care whether I would be successful or not. People are willing to take. They are all taking also. If we preach together, the saying of Mahāprabhu, pṛthivīte, will come true. We have everything. Spread the holy name and distribute prasādam. There is a beautiful field. In Africa, in Russia, everywhere they're accepting."

When Prabhupāda began asking his Godbrothers to forgive him, they protested. "You are the eternal leader," one of them asserted. "You rule over us, guide us, and chastise us."

"Forgive all my offenses," Prabhupāda repeated. "I became proud of all my opulence."

"No," said Purī Mahārāja, "you never became proud. When you started preaching, opulence and success followed you. That was the blessing of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There cannot be any question of your being offensive."

When Śrīla Prabhupāda presented himself as mahā-patita, greatly fallen, Purī Mahārāja did not accept it. "You have saved millions of people around the world," he said. "Therefore there is no question of offenses. But you should be called mahā-patita-pāvana [the great savior of the fallen]."

Prabhupāda's disciples regarded Prabhupāda's asking for his Godbrothers' forgiveness as a manifestation of his humility. But they were also puzzled. Certainly Prabhupāda's Godbrothers were sincere in saying Prabhupāda had committed no offense. Whatever he had done, he had done for Kṛṣṇa. But Śrīla Prabhupāda was also sincere in asking for forgiveness. That was the beautiful gem of his humility—to ask everyone for forgiveness.

For the purpose of preaching, displaying this gem had not always been the most effective way to spread the merciful teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa in every town and village. But now it could be displayed. In London and now in Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda was showing his disciples extra affection and gratitude, without the reprimands usually necessary in training disciples. This attitude of complete humility was a symptom of the highest stage of devotional life. Śrīla Prabhupāda had explained in his books that the madhyamādhikārī, the second-class devotee, makes distinctions between the devotees, the innocent nondevotees, and the demons, whereas the mahā-bhāgavata, or first-class devotee, sees everyone—except himself—as a servant of God. Sometimes, however, the mahā-bhāgavata desires to come down from the first-class platform to the second-class platform, just to take up the most compassionate service of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda's disciples had all read of the mahā-bhāgavata stage in the scriptures, and now they were seeing it fully displayed, as Prabhupāda referred to himself as the most fallen and asked for everyone's forgiveness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had heard of the program of his disciple Lokanātha Swami, who was taking a small group of men on a bullock cart and preaching in villages throughout India. Lokanātha had told Śrīla Prabhupāda how in the course of their travels they had recently visited tīrthas such as Badarikasrama and Bhim Kapur. Śrīla Prabhupāda was enlivened to hear this, and he then evolved a transcendental desire to go himself on a cart pulled by bullocks to circumambulate the area of Vṛndāvana. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Bhavānanda, who were serving Prabhupāda with increased intimacy, felt themselves unable to support Śrīla Prabhupāda in his desire, since they thought his fragile body could not survive such rough treatment on the roads.

But Śrīla Prabhupāda reasoned that "Dying on parikrama is glorious," and he asked them to take him. A controversy developed among the devotees, as some said Prabhupāda's will to go on parikrama should be immediately honored as an order from the spiritual master; he wanted it, and he should not be denied. The doctor, however, assured them that Śrīla Prabhupāda's body would not survive the jostling of the cart. The many devotees who crowded around Śrīla Prabhupāda's bed held different opinions, and Prabhupāda could see this. Following his request, however, Lokanātha went out and hired a cart with bullocks and prepared it for the ride. Lokanātha and Hamsadūta

suggested that the parikrama could go to the city of Vṛndāvana or visit the seven main temples of the Gosvāmīs. But then they said that since the next day was Govardhana-pūjā, Prabhupāda could go to Govardhana Hill. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, Bhavānanda, and Bhakti-cāru, however, protested adamantly against the parikrama.

"One-day experiment," Prabhupāda said. "It is for one day. Rest assured I will not die in one day." He liked the idea of going to Govardhana. "And we shall make our cooking there," he said. Lokanātha Swami, he assured them, was experienced. "Make very good picnic," he said.

After discussing back and forth, the devotees finally decided that early the next morning they would take Śrīla Prabhupāda in a bullock cart to Govardhana. The majority of the devotees then left Śrīla Prabhupāda alone for the night.

Later that night Śrīla Prabhupāda received a visit from Niṣkiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī, who sat with Prabhupāda, chanting and sometimes speaking in Bengali. Suddenly, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Bhavānanda came to Prabhupāda's bedside. They were in tears and beside themselves with anxiety.

Prabhupāda understood. "You request me not to go?" he asked.

"Well, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "I'll tell you, I'm getting so upset sitting in the room upstairs. I was walking around. Two of the devotees told me that this road is so bad that if you go on this road you're going to be jolted back and forth. The road is terrible. I just can't understand, Śrīla Prabhupāda, why it has to be tomorrow that we have to go. Of anybody that wants you to travel, I do. But why do we have to go when you're in this condition? I can't understand it. Why are we throwing everything out the window that we must go tomorrow? I can't understand."

"All right," said Śrīla Prabhupāda softly, immediately agreeing to their proposal that he not go.

"Jaya, Śrīla Prabhupāda!" said Bhakti-cāru, who was also present.

"Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Bhavānanda with great relief.

"All right. You're satisfied?"

"Now I am, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Bhavānanda. "Yes. I was in too much anxiety."

"Never mind. I shall not put you in anxiety."

"Actually, Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "we're so much attached to you that you practically drive us Tomadness sometimes. To night we were becoming mad."

"No, no, I shall not do that," said Prabhupāda. "Bābājī Mahārāja," Prabhupāda turned to Niṣkiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī and said, "—just see how much affection they have for me."

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, "the way you deal with us simply deepens our attachment every moment."

"It is my duty," said Prabhupāda, and the devotees laughed warmly, understanding. Yes, they could understand—that was his duty. By all his actions and dealings, Prabhupāda's intention was to capture spirit souls and deliver them to Kṛṣṇa. His method was loving service, but he did not do it for himself. He was delivering them to Kṛṣṇa. That was his duty.

On November 14, 1977, at 7:30 P.M., in his room at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave his final instruction by leaving this mortal world and going back to Godhead.

His departure was exemplary, because his whole life was exemplary. His departure marked the completion of a lifetime of pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. A few days before the end, Śrīla Prabhupāda had said he was instructing as far as he could, and his secretary had added, "You are the inspiration." "Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda had replied, "that I shall do until the last breathing."

Prabhupāda's "last breathing" was glorious, not because of any last minute mystical demonstration, but because Śrīla Prabhupāda remained in perfect Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Like grandfather Bhiṣmadeva, he remained completely collected and noble and grave, teaching until the end. He was preaching that life comes from life, not from matter, and he was showing that one should preach with every breath he has. The many devotees who crowded the large room bore witness that up to the very end, Prabhupāda remained exactly the same. There was nothing suddenly in congruous with what he had previously shown and taught them. At the time of his departure, therefore, he was teaching how to die, by always depending on Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's passing away was peaceful. During the evening of November 14, the kavirāja asked him, "Is there anything you want?" and Prabhupāda replied faintly, *kuch icchā nahīn*: "I have no desire." His passing away was in the perfect situation: in Vṛndāvana, with devotees. A few months previously, a young girl, the daughter of one of Prabhupāda's disciples, had passed away in Vṛndāvana, and when Śrīla Prabhupāda had been asked if she went back to Godhead to personally associate with Kṛṣṇa, he had said, "Yes, anyone who leaves his body in Vṛndāvana is liberated."

Of course, "Vṛndāvana" also means the state of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As Advaita Ācārya had said of Lord Caitanya, "Wherever You are is Vṛndāvana." And this was also true of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Had Śrīla Prabhupāda passed away in London, New York, or Moscow, therefore, his destination would have been the same. As Lord Kṛṣṇa states in the Bhagavad-gītā, "One who is always thinking of Me, surely he attains to Me." But because Vṛndāvana-dhāma is the quintessential realm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness within the universe, the ideal place for departure from this world, so it was yet another exemplary feature of Śrīla Prabhupāda's life that he went back to Godhead with Vṛndāvana as his last junction.

Those Vaiṣṇavas who had taken the vow never to risk leaving Vṛndāvana could see that Śrīla Prabhupāda, after sacrificing everything—including the benefit of residing in Vṛndāvana—to deliver fallen souls in the most godforsaken locations of the world, had returned to the holy land of Vṛndāvana and from there had departed for the original abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual sky. As stated in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, "Anyone who executes service in Vṛndāvana certainly goes back to home, back to Godhead, after giving up his body."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure was also perfect because he was chanting and hearing the holy names of God. Thus the Supreme Personality of Godhead was present at Śrīla Prabhupāda's passing just as He was at the celebrated passing away of Bhīṣmadeva, who said, "Despite His being equally kind to everyone, He has graciously come before me while I am ending my life, for I am His unflinching servitor." As Lord Kṛṣṇa came before Bhīṣmadeva, assuring him and everyone else that Bhīṣma was returning back to Godhead on leaving his body, so the Lord in His incarnation of namāvatāra, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, was present for Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's life had been dedicated to spreading the holy name to every town and village, and for a month he had been surrounding himself with the holy name. For his passing away, he especially wanted to fill the room with devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa fulfilled that wish. Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, departed under the most favorable circumstances possible—in the most sacred place, Vṛndāvana, surrounded by Vaiṣṇavas chanting the holy name.

An ideal spiritual teacher (ācārya) always acts in such a way that others may follow his example. As Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam states, these great souls who cross over the ocean of birth and death by taking shelter of the "boat" of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa miraculously leave the boat on this side for others to use. And Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, by its perfect example, affords all conditioned souls the means for meeting the greatest of all dangers. An auspicious death is not merely a matter of psychological adjustment, so that one may die without regret or without becoming unduly upset. The real point is that at the time of death the soul must leave the body and take his next birth. Only the Kṛṣṇa conscious soul can leave this world of birth and death and attain an eternal, blissful life in the spiritual world. Therefore one's life is tested at death.

Death means the soul cannot stand to live in the body anymore. Whatever the material cause may be, the situation has become unbearable for the soul. And leaving the body causes great distress. The śāstras, therefore, advise us to get free from the cycle of repeated birth and death. Meeting an inauspicious death and being dragged down to a lower birth is the most fearful thing for the living being. So fearful is it that we may try to ignore death altogether. Death is painful because the eternal spirit soul is placed in a most unnatural situation: although he is eternal and should not have to die, he is forced to die because of his connection with the material body. At death, the eternal soul is forced to leave the body for a destination he knows not. Thus he is full of fear and suffering. The pain and fear are usually overwhelming, and one thinks only of material attachments or bodily pain. Therefore King Kulaśekhara prayed, and Prabhupāda often quoted, "Please let me pass away, not in some prolonged contemplation of my bodily death, but just while I'm chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. If I can meditate on You and then pass from this body, that will be perfection."

Over the last months of his life in this world, Śrīla Prabhupāda taught how it is possible to meet death step by step in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In his last days, he told one of his sannyāsīs, "Don't think this isn't going to happen to you." Prabhupāda came into this world, on Kṛṣṇa's request, to teach us how to live a pure life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and that includes how to finally pass away from this world to attain eternal life. Prabhupāda underwent death in a way that was perfect and glorious, and at the same time in a way which we can all follow. When we have to go, we can cling to the memory of how a great soul left his body—always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, surrounding himself with the medicine of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, always desiring to hear about Kṛṣṇa, and practicing detachment from the misery of the material condition. This last lesson was one of the most

wonderful and important instructions Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us. He taught by his life, by his books, and at the end by his dying. Education in how to die is meant especially for the human being. An animal dies, and a human being also dies; but a human being is supposed to understand the process of going back to the spiritual world at the time of death. Remaining always fixed and undisturbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Śrīla Prabhupāda expertly taught the process. His passing away, therefore, was a perfect lesson, and one that can be faithfully followed.

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While there was nothing lamentable for Śrīla Prabhupāda in his departing from the world and going back to Godhead, it was certainly lamentable for his followers and for the people of the whole world, who became bereft of the presence of their greatest well-wisher and benefactor. Śrīla Prabhupāda had written in a Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam purport, "When the mortal body of the spiritual master expires, the disciple should cry exactly like the queen cries when the king leaves his body." At the departure of his own spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written, "On that day, O my Master, I made a cry of grief; I was not able to tolerate the absence of you, my guru." And so on November 14, 1977, as the powerful news spread around the world, those who knew and loved Śrīla Prabhupāda were gripped by a fearful, unrestricted grief. They saw everything around them in the overwhelming atmosphere of separation from Śrīla Prabhupāda. They turned for solace to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

However, the disciples and the spiritual master are never separated, because the spiritual master always keeps company with the disciple, as long as the disciple follows the instructions of the spiritual master. This is called the association of vāṇī. Physical presence is called vapuḥ. As long as the spiritual master is physically present, the disciple should serve the physical body of the spiritual master, and when the spiritual master is no longer physically existing, the disciples should serve the instructions of the spiritual master.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples were already carrying out his instructions, but now they would have to do so without the vapuḥ, without the opportunity of regularly seeing and being with him. At first this was very difficult for them to face, but those who were sincere soon realized that Śrīla Prabhupāda had, upon his departure, given them the greatest gift of all: service in separation.

Service in separation is the highest realization and ecstasy. This was the teaching of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, in regard to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His foremost devotees, the gopīs of Vṛndāvana. When Kṛṣṇa left His beloved gopīs and went to Mathurā, never to return to them in Vṛndāvana, the gopīs (and all the other residents of Vṛndāvana) wept piteously in separation. They so much loved Kṛṣṇa that they could not live without Him, and to maintain their lives they began to constantly remember and discuss His name, fame, form, and entourage. By constantly remembering Him in love and by anticipating His return to Vṛndāvana, they achieved an ecstasy of union in separation, which Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholars declare to be superior even to the ecstasy the gopīs felt in Kṛṣṇa's presence. Because Kṛṣṇa is absolute, even remembering Him or chanting His name puts the devotee into direct contact with Him. But because there is simultaneously a feeling of separation from Him, there is an added dimension of inconceivable, simultaneous union and separation. This is the epitome of Kṛṣṇa conscious realization.

Prabhupāda's followers knew this principle of service in separation, technically known as *vipralambha-sevā*, but to most devotees it was a theoretical realization. Before one can feel intense loving separation from Kṛṣṇa, one must first feel intense attraction to Him. But for the conditioned soul who has forgotten and abandoned Kṛṣṇa and has come to the material world under the spell of *māyā*, illusion—for him, “separation” from Kṛṣṇa is based on complete ignorance and forgetfulness.

In coming to spiritual life, a neophyte first begins to awaken to the very existence of God, as he overcomes atheistic misconceptions. Next, he comes gradually, through practice, to take up a relationship of service to Kṛṣṇa, through serving the spiritual master. Intense love of Kṛṣṇa in separation is the most advanced stage and cannot possibly be realized in full by the neophyte. Thus service in separation had remained a theoretical teaching to many of Prabhupāda's followers.

But when Śrīla Prabhupāda departed from the world and left his disciples to carry on his mission, they immediately realized union with him in separation. He was gone, but he was still very much present. This realization was not a pretention or a myth, nor was it sentimental psychic phenomena—telepathy, “communion with the dead,” or so on. It was a completely substantive, practical, palpable reality, a fact of life. Śrīla Prabhupāda had given them personal service, and now they would continue that service. Prabhupāda was still present through his instructions, and all the nectar of his direct association—all the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that he had given and shared with them—was still available.

Service in separation for Prabhupāda's disciples was undoubtedly a fact, otherwise, now that they were without his personal presence, how were they able to sustain themselves in spiritual life? The fact that they could continue as before, increase their feelings of devotion, and even increase their serving capacity, meant that Śrīla Prabhupāda was very much still with them. As Śrīla Prabhupāda's last instruction was the lesson of how a human being should die, he now taught, beyond dying, how to practically implement the highest philosophical teachings of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

This realization gave the devotees great hope that Śrīla Prabhupāda and the revolutionary life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness he had brought with him were not finished upon his departure. Often when a great personality dies, his contribution collapses; but Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence remained and expanded, sustaining his devotees' lives. He was still in charge.

EPILOGUE

In describing how the followers of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda continue to relish the nectar of serving him in separation, we are not speaking of only a small band of several thousand devotees whom he initiated during his lifetime. Śrīla Prabhupāda was not only an *ācārya*, but he was the founder-*ācārya* of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, which is a dynamic spiritual reality. That reality is nothing less than the *yuga-dharma*, or the form of spiritual life recommended for all humanity in the present age of Kali, the most dangerous of ages, in which humanity eventually abandons all religious principles.

The ultimate goal of human life was taught by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, when He declared, “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.” Kṛṣṇa taught this five thousand years ago, when He appeared in the world,

but people have misinterpreted and misunderstood what Kṛṣṇa meant. Lord Caitanya advented, therefore, to revive the original message of surrender to Kṛṣṇa, primarily by introducing the saṅkīrtana movement of chanting the holy names of God.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya appearing in the nineteenth century, foresaw that Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana principles could and would be introduced all over the world. He had studied deeply many other religions and philosophies, but he felt that Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana was universal, the essence of religious life able to unite all people and bring them to perfection. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's son was Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who became the spiritual master of Śrīla Prabhupāda and who ordered Śrīla Prabhupāda to implement the vision of worldwide Kṛṣṇa consciousness by going to preach in the West.

A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda is, therefore, to be appreciated not only as the guru of a few intimate servants or even the guru of a single generation of disciples. As the founder-ācārya of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, he introduced the standard of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as it can be practiced by all sincere followers for thousands of years to come.

The scriptures predict that although the present age is constantly becoming more inauspicious, unfortunate, and degraded, for a period of ten thousand years from the time of Lord Caitanya's advent a golden age of Kṛṣṇa consciousness can appear, despite the force of Kali-yuga. Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, prepared his translations and Bhaktivedānta purports on the essential Vaiṣṇava scriptures—Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Caitanya-caritāmṛta, and Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu—with the plan that they would form the foundation of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for ten thousand years.

We cannot limit Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, by describing him only within the drama of his being the guru for one generation of followers. Śrīla Prabhupāda is jagad-guru, the spiritual master of the entire world. He is a bona fide spiritual master, faithfully conveying the message of the disciplic succession from Lord Kṛṣṇa, as he received it in paramparā from his spiritual master. But more than that, he was empowered by Kṛṣṇa to do what no other spiritual master has ever done. He is the founder-ācārya for spreading Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana worldwide in the midst of the age of Kali.

Anyone who wants shelter from the evil effects of the present godless age can have it by taking up devotional service under the guidance of Lord Caitanya's teachings as given by Prabhupāda. The dynamic preaching and realizations of Śrīla Prabhupāda reveal the sublime teachings of Lord Caitanya, which otherwise have been neglected, misused, and kept within the confines of India. Śrīla Prabhupāda was actually able to understand Lord Caitanya's prediction that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would spread to every town and village in the world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had faith in these words and personally saw in his lifetime that pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness could be adopted by people of all races and cultures, even those considered by Vedic standards to be aborigines and outcasts. Through the applications of Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is now proven to be viable for anyone, anywhere in the world.

Anyone can serve Śrīla Prabhupāda in separation. He asked all his followers to avoid four sinful activities—meat-eating, intoxication, illicit sex, and gambling—and to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra

a minimum of sixteen rounds daily on beads. He also advised that one regularly read Vedic literatures such as Bhagavad-gītā As It Is and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. And for keeping spiritual health and strength to follow the spiritual principles, he advised that one associate with like-minded devotees. Whoever follows these basic practices and recognizes Śrīla Prabhupāda as the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa is his follower. And the Vedic scriptures say that only by serving the representative of Kṛṣṇa can one become dear to Kṛṣṇa Himself.

The ways of serving Kṛṣṇa are unlimited, as Śrīla Prabhupāda expertly displayed. He invited scientists, artists, philosophers, and businessmen to serve Kṛṣṇa according to their occupations and capabilities. The artist, instead of painting pictures out of his imagination or making renderings of the material energy, can paint pictures depicting Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world. The poet can describe Kṛṣṇa as the Absolute Truth; the philosopher can explain Kṛṣṇa as the cause of all causes; the scientist can prove that life comes from life; and the businessman can contribute money to the worthiest welfare activity of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A person does not, therefore, have to abandon his family or retreat to a solitary cave to realize God. In any situation of life one can move from mundane to spiritual by adopting the practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the broad and liberal way Śrīla Prabhupāda intended Kṛṣṇa consciousness to pervade society.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Prabhupāda's own society of devotees, is meant to help all persons interested in developing spiritual life under Śrīla Prabhupāda's guidance. ISKCON was Prabhupāda's organization for establishing and proliferating temple worship, book printing and distribution, and communities where devotees could live and serve together in close association. Prabhupāda therefore entrusted all his properties, including the magnificent temples he had built in India, to ISKCON, for the protection and perpetuation of his work. And he instructed his disciples to show their love for him by always cooperating among themselves to expand further the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

When a disciple expressed his appreciation of Prabhupāda's magnificent quarters in Bombay, Prabhupāda replied, "I cannot take these with me. I am leaving them for you to use."

The essential gifts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness which Prabhupāda brought are for everyone. Although most people do not know it, they are actually hankering for the happiness of genuine spiritual life. Prabhupāda, out of compassion, wanted to distribute the gifts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to all the hungry people in the world. These gifts—peace of mind, satisfaction, freedom from anxiety—can be obtained by anyone who takes wholeheartedly to devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This pure, happy state can be realized by receiving the ongoing, dynamic legacy which Prabhupāda left: his books, his devotees, his Kṛṣṇa consciousness society, and his method of expertly applying Kṛṣṇa consciousness to every situation in the modern context. Whoever intelligently takes up the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will also inherit the most wonderful realization in his relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

We hope that the Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta will help the readers in establishing their relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Its contribution is in the mood of remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda in separation. Remembering his pastimes puts one into direct contact with him and with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and this remembrance can free one from bondage to material life and

enable one to taste the nectar of the eternal pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and His associates in the spiritual world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's life did not end on November 14, 1977. And we hope that the readers of Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta will not feel they have finished their connection with this literature by having read it once. Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta can be read regularly, from beginning to end. Our hope is that by hearing about Śrīla Prabhupāda the reader will become himself a Prabhupādānuga, a follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We can wish no better fortune upon anyone.

THUS ENDS THE SIXTH VOLUME OF THE ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA-LĪLĀMṚTA, COMPLETED ON NOVEMBER 9, 1982, IN THE KĀRTIKA SEASON, AT THE ISKCON KRISHNA-BALARAM MANDIR IN VṚNDĀVANA.

SPL 56: Return to America - Volume 7 - Extra's

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

Volume 7 - Extra's

Return to America

= San Francisco

December 14, 1967

As soon as Śrīla Prabhupāda came into view, many devotees began to cry out or shed tears. He looked much healthier, tanned from the sun, spritely. He waved and smiled. That smile made them still more eager, and they could hardly contain themselves while Prabhupāda patiently waited for a customs official to inspect his bags.

When Prabhupāda had left America, his disciples had been uncertain whether they would ever see him again. He had suffered a paralyzing stroke in New York and had gone back to India to recuperate. If he were going to die, he had said, the best place in the world was Vṛndāvana. But soon in his letters from India came news of his returning strength. Kṛṣṇa had saved him. Now he was back. They needed him; if they were to represent him and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then they needed more association with Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee.

Jayānanda drove him from the airport in an old limousine decorated with flowers. Prabhupāda would be staying in an apartment in the brahmacārīs' house on Willard Street, about two blocks from the storefront temple on Frederick Street. As he approached the door of his apartment, he saw the picture of Lord Viṣṇu, taped to the inside of the glass, facing him. Although the devotees had debated about the picture because Lord Viṣṇu had not been colored blue, Prabhupāda joined his palms together in the praṇāma gesture and, slightly bowing his head, passed Lord Viṣṇu and entered the house.

The devotees gathered excitedly in Prabhupāda's room. One of them had read about a Vaiṣṇava ceremony of washing the feet of the spiritual master, so they had prepared a pitcher of water and a bowl. Prabhupāda permitted it, and in a few seconds it was done. Then he sat facing a crowded room of intimate devotees. Taking his karatālas and playing them softly and sweetly, he led a Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana. It was no ordinary thing how Prabhupāda sang and how they listened and chanted in response with fastened, ecstatic attention. But it was brief.

Afterwards, he began to speak of Kṛṣṇa. He said that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and everyone's best friend. Even a good friendship in this world is a small indication of Kṛṣṇa's friendship, because everything is coming from Kṛṣṇa. If you feel good on a nice spring day, that is an indication of Kṛṣṇa. The smell of an aromatic flower—that is Kṛṣṇa. Whatever is good in this world is Kṛṣṇa, and all that is bad comes from forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda spoke with a kind, gentle, and humble attitude.

He had brought back some gifts. For the ladies he had sārīs. He held up the thin cotton cloths one at a time, called the name of each initiated girl disciple, and handed her a sārī. One sārī was white with a red and black design, others were white with single-color borders. In a small saffron cloth Prabhupāda had three silken garlands. He unwrapped them, saying, "These can be tied around the necks of Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Balarāma." Previous to this, the deities had received no dresses or decorations.

Mukunda and Śyāmasundara came forward to show Prabhupāda their first American-made karatālas. Months ago Prabhupāda had suggested that they might make karatālas in America, and the men had analyzed the metals in the Indian karatālas, gathered the ingredients from scrapyards, taken them to a foundry, and had them molded into a finished product. Prabhupāda took the first pair of American karatālas in his hand, hit them together a few times, and pronounced, "Not so great." Again he took up his own beautifully polished brass karatālas from India. Striking them together once, he let them ring for a long time. "This is great," he said.

Then, looking around the room, Prabhupāda engaged in friendly little exchanges with his disciples. Seeing Līlāvatī sitting in a corner with her baby daughter, Subhadrā, Prabhupāda said, "Your daughter looks just like Subhadrā." Līlāvatī sighed gratefully to hear it. "Govinda dāsī," Prabhupāda said, "I am always thinking of your paintings."

Prabhupāda asked whether all the devotees were chanting their prescribed sixteen rounds daily. Almost everyone replied, "Yes, Swamiji." One new devotee, however, an English girl whose face turned bright red, began to stammer in a faltering voice. "I chant..." she said, "I chant..." and then suddenly blurting out like a little girl about to cry, "Sometimes I chant more than sixteen rounds a day!" Her voice cracked, and she seemed on the brink of tears, but the devotees and Prabhupāda could not help from laughing. In Prabhupāda's presence it all seemed jovial. Uddhava dāsa came into the room and announced, "We have some prasādam for you, Swamiji. Would you like to take now?"

"What?" asked Prabhupāda. "A little rice?" The devotees began to laugh, thinking of the elaborate feast they had prepared for Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda had one more thing to show them in his bag. It was a coconut grater commonly used in Bengali households. Prabhupāda gave it to Yamunā, who began to grate a coconut while the devotees watched. Surrounded by his devotees, Prabhupāda then went to the kitchen and prepared coconut laddus made from the white coconut pulp, butter, sugar, black pepper, cardamom, and camphor flavor. He rolled them into balls, ate one himself, and distributed a few.

Prabhupāda returned to his room, where he sat down again and was silent. Sensing that he should be left alone, the devotees excused themselves from his presence. Everyone was satisfied. Prabhupāda was back, and they would have him for a while.

Jīvānanda: After everybody left, I stayed behind to talk to him, and seeing me just kind of sitting there, he put me to work and made me clean up his room. I began to pick up the paper and stuff and throw away all the boxes. So afterwards Prabhupāda said, "So you have some question?" And I said, "Yes, Swamiji. I would like to get married to Harṣarāṇī." He said, "Oh. Who are you?" I said, "I am Jīvānanda." He said, "Oh, you have been initiated?" I said, "Yes." He said, "By me?" and I said, "Yes." He said, "That's very nice. What do you do?" I said, "Well, when I was in Santa Fe, I used to milk the cows." He said, "That is very nice." We talked some more, and then I said, "Swamiji, can I get married?" He said, "I will think about it. You can ask me again later."

Cidānanda: That evening I went to his room to see him, as I felt he might be lonely. I went into his room to try to keep him company, but as soon as I got there he started talking about Kṛṣṇa. There were some Brijabasi posters of Kṛṣṇa on the wall, and he would point to them and explain a little, saying, "Here is Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra." He talked, and I didn't have a chance to say anything, but he just talked about the posters on the wall. I got the feeling that we had known each other from some other time, although this was the first time I was seeing him. Yet he seemed like an old friend. He was certainly magnanimous and cordial as he sat there and talked about Kṛṣṇa. I felt that if he was an old friend, then maybe I would know this to be a fact some day. But my attention span was not very long, and I really didn't know very much about the life of Kṛṣṇa, so I left after a short period of time.

Prabhupāda had a small band of disciples in San Francisco—not more than fifteen—but they were becoming intensely attached to him, especially since his poignant departure and now his return into their midst. Each of them wanted to engage more in Prabhupāda's personal service, although only his secretaries, Gaurasundara and Govinda dāśī, and his servant, Upendra, were allowed to be with him constantly. One of the devotees asked Prabhupāda about feeling envy toward those devotees who seemed to be especially favored. Everyone, Prabhupāda replied, from Lord Brahmā and Indra down to the insignificant ant, is sometimes envious. No one wants to tolerate another person's advancement or an other person's taking an exalted position. And it is a fact, Prabhupāda said, that if we find a person excelling in a field or serving the spiritual master, then that person is very fortunate by Kṛṣṇa's arrangement. But in the spiritual world there is not envy over such a thing. Rather, in the spiritual world everyone is pleased and excited to see that one person is in a more advanced position. They are enthused and gladdened by it. But in the material world there is always competitive nature and envy. His words pacified them. If Prabhupāda allowed someone to serve him, they would accept it as the arrangement of Kṛṣṇa.

But everyone got a chance to accompany Swamiji on his morning walks. They were open to whoever wanted to go. Usually one or two of the brahmacārīs and one or two householder couples would accompany him. They would drive Prabhupāda to the park in the temple's car, a 1952 blue Ford coupe. Usually Jayānanda would drive the car. The passenger seat was broken and tilted back at a forty-five-degree angle to the ground, and although Prabhupāda sat up straight, his chin held high, the seat slanted so much that he could only see out of the lowest part of the window. But it was the only car they had, and Prabhupāda never complained.

He began his old routine of daily walking around Stowe Lake in Golden Gate Park. Healthy, free, and spontaneous, always in command, talking and preaching, Prabhupāda seemed very happy to be back in San Francisco. And there were also new devotees who were seeing him for the first time.

For about the first week on his morning walks, Prabhupāda talked frequently about the existence of the soul, explaining Kṛṣṇa's arguments in the Bhagavad-gītā.

One morning a car was parked near where they walked, and seated in the driver's seat was a dejected-looking man who sat slumped over, with a long, drawn, unhappy face. Day after day this car appeared there, and the man sat unhappily while the devotees walked past in the company of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Finally, after about a week, Prabhupāda one day broke away from the group of devotees and approached the man's car. The car window was rolled up, but on seeing Prabhupāda, the man rolled down the window. Prabhupāda greeted him, "Good morning." The man smiled, happy to see Prabhupāda, as if he had never noticed Prabhupāda and the devotees walking by day after day. Prabhupāda then rejoined his disciples and continued walking. They looked back and saw that the deep unhappiness in the man's face had vanished and he appeared happier. They did not see him any more on the morning walks. Among themselves the devotees discussed these things or kept the impressions privately in their hearts. After a little incident like that of the man sitting slumped in his car, they were even more convinced that Swamiji had the power and ability to make people happy, and that he really wanted to do it.

One morning Prabhupāda arrived in the park, stepped out of his car, and waited for the devotees who had come in another car to join him. Līlāvati had difficulty getting out of the car because she had her baby, Subhadrā, in a carrier on her back. When she finally did get out of the car, Prabhupāda turned and laughed at her, saying, "Ah, burden of affection." "Yes, Swamiji," Līlāvati replied. They all began to walk together along the path.

"So there are two ways to carry a baby," Prabhupāda said, tapping his cane on the ground in time with his regular stride. "There is the monkey way and the cat way. Do you know this?"

"No, Swamiji," said Līlāvati.

"Well, which way do you think is better?" Prabhupāda asked her. "The monkey way or the cat way?" She couldn't understand or imagine what he meant. Prabhupāda continued, "The monkey baby climbs on the back of the mother and holds on, and this is the way he travels. And the kitten is carried in the teeth of the mother. So which is better?"

Līlāvātī could still not understand which way could be better; they both sounded very difficult to her.

"Well," Prabhupāda said, "the monkey baby is very small and very weak, and he is holding on to the mother by his own strength. But the kitten is being supported by the strength of the mother. So which way do you think is better?"

And then she understood. "The cat way is better."

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "that is the difference between the yogī and the devotee. The yogī is trying to climb on the back of the Absolute Truth by his own strength, but he is very weak, so he will fall. But a devotee, he cries out for Kṛṣṇa"—and as he spoke the word Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda held his arms up high and looked up at the clear morning sky—"A devotee cries out for Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa picks him up."

Another time a devotee picked a pretty bluish-colored flower and handed it to Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda took it, smelled it, then held it far away and looked at it, saying, "Oh, this is like a beautiful man without any qualifications." He then tossed it away. It had no aroma.

Upendra liked to ask Swamiji questions on the morning walks.

"Swamiji," Upendra asked, "what does the spiritual master or pure devotee see as he walks through the park?"

"He sees Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda replied. "He thinks that these are Kṛṣṇa's trees, and this is Kṛṣṇa's house. He sees everything as belonging to the Supreme Lord."

"But if Kṛṣṇa is everywhere," Upendra pursued, "does the pure devotee see Kṛṣṇa on the wall on the right and then the wall on the left or in the corner or in between every atom? Does he see one form of Kṛṣṇa merge into another? Where does one form of Kṛṣṇa begin and take off from the other form?"

"No, it is not like that," Prabhupāda said. "Do you see my spectacles?"

"Yes," said Upendra.

"So whose spectacles are they?" Prabhupāda asked.

"They are yours."

Prabhupāda pointed to his shoes. "And what is that?"

"Those are your shoes," said Upendra.

"Yes," Prabhupāda said. "Similarly, a pure devotee sees Kṛṣṇa like that. Everything is Kṛṣṇa's. This is how he sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere." Near the end of the walk, when Prabhupāda had answered many

questions, Upendra asked again, "Swamiji, you've spoken to us so much, but I forget most of it. If a devotee becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious, will he remember everything the spiritual master says?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "It is all there. Not only that, but when a person becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious, he will be able to see his relationship with Kṛṣṇa."

Walking through Golden Gate Park one day, they heard a scratching coming from a garbage can. Prabhupāda went over and looked in, then pulled back in repulsion. A big city rat had somehow become trapped in the garbage can and was scratching, trying to get out. Prabhupāda shook his head and said, "He is doomed." He walked on. Prabhupāda commented that later the garbagemen would come, see the rat, and kill him. Prabhupāda was always after the philosophical and Kṛṣṇa conscious meaning; even a seemingly ordinary comment about the rat's doom struck his disciples as deep and philosophical. They could understand that their position was similar: they were trapped in the material world, waiting for the end, but Prabhupāda was saving them.

On his return from India, after taking part in the first evening kīrtana in the San Francisco temple, Prabhupāda said, "You have all advanced." He saw that the devotees had become more enthusiastic and ecstatic—guests were also rising and dancing—and that pleased his own Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Each night after kīrtana he would lecture. He was discussing the verses in the sixth chapter of Bhagavad-gītā. "I am making here a series of lectures on the Kṛṣṇa conscious yoga system," Prabhupāda wrote to Brahmānanda in mid-December of 1967, "and they are tape recorded."

Prabhupāda thought of assembling the lectures into a small book. Indian gurus introducing self-styled techniques were increasingly popular in the U.S. Therefore Prabhupāda wanted to distinguish the standard form of yoga and meditation, as taught by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-gītā, from the farce taught by gurus who never mention Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead but rather say everyone is equal to God, and whose disciples are allowed to indulge their senses in intoxication and illicit sex. They give a mantra for a fee, Prabhupāda noted, and claim that by meditating twenty minutes in the morning you can become God in six months. He was surprised that American people, who were supposedly intelligent, were being so easily cheated. "We have actually seen such so-called yogīs," Prabhupāda said, "sleeping and snoring while meditating."

"Service begins by the tongue," Prabhupāda said in one of his December '67 lectures, "by chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa, and by the taste of kṛṣṇa-prasādam. The beginning process is very nice. If prasādam is offered to you, accept it. If you become submissive and give service, by these two practices, Kṛṣṇa will reveal Himself to you—just like Kṛṣṇa is revealing Himself to Arjuna. Arjuna is a devotee, he is a friend: 'I am speaking to you that old system of yoga, bhakti-yoga.' Only one who has developed the service spirit with love and devotion, he can understand Kṛṣṇa."

After the lecture Prabhupāda would continue the theme, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in his room. It was the same theme as on his morning walks, in his letters, or in his intimate talks with individual disciples or visitors; it was the theme of his writing, and the very heartbeat of his life. When a devotee asked Prabhupāda how the soul is carried from body to body, Prabhupāda replied, "By

desire," and cited himself as an example. "Just like I have come to America. Why? Because I wanted to preach. So by that desire I was carried here. Otherwise, I have no business to come here."

Cidānanda: There would be three, four, or five devotees in his room, and he would just start talking. They would somehow gather in his room, and he would start talking about what he was trying to do. His talk was not directed specifically to anyone, but he was saying that this is what he was doing. He made everything very clear. He wanted to publish his books. He was trying to get a press for this back in New York. And if he had a letter from Rāya Rāma in New York, he would read the letter right there. In this way it was allaying any doubts in people's minds about what he was really going to try to do. He had his books and the temple. He was concerned about the temple and the new lunch program, where we were giving out free prasādam. His concern kept everybody going. Before he came, there wasn't that much activity. But when Prabhupāda came, things started bustling very fast.

One night in his room on Willard Street, Prabhupāda was talking about seeing Kṛṣṇa. "Don't try to see Him," Prabhupāda said, "but act in such a way that He will come and see you... Sūradāsa was a blind man, yet due to his sincere chanting—"O Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa"—Kṛṣṇa came to see him. So Kṛṣṇa is there whether we see Him or not. All we must do is become sincere, and He will present Himself whether we see Him or not. Kṛṣṇa hugs the cow. What does a cow know? He is a dumb animal. Is the cow as great as Arjuna? No. Yet due to the cow's sincerity to come and lick Kṛṣṇa's body, Kṛṣṇa says, "Oh, yes, My dear cow, come, and I shall take care of you." And Kṛṣṇa gives him some sweet nectar. So we should want Kṛṣṇa to come and see us, not that you should want to see Kṛṣṇa."

At that time, few devotees were very well read in Prabhupāda's books. They didn't know the vastness of the philosophy. Only a few books were published, and so Prabhupāda in person was the real source of Kṛṣṇa conscious knowledge.

Eighteen-year-old Kim used to have philosophical arguments with his atheistic father and then invariably have questions for Prabhupāda at the end of the lectures. He would ask so consistently that Prabhupāda would turn to him and say, "Are there any questions?" Given a good question, Prabhupāda might launch into another impromptu lecture.

Kim's sister, who was only sixteen, also wanted to get initiated. "Are there offenses in the spiritual world?" she asked Prabhupāda at one evening lecture. Prabhupāda turned to the audience. "See?" he said. "This little girl, she wants to go back to Godhead." And in the course of the answer, he said, "Kṛṣṇa may kiss you." When he said that, Kim's sister blushed, and everyone laughed.

Upendra asked, "Swamiji, how should we feel humble? I feel sometimes that when I try to be humble I first think about it, and then I try to be humble. But it seems artificial."

"This is humbleness," Prabhupāda said. "When we think, 'Oh, I should have done it this way'—that is good. Because then there is always room for improvement. If you go on thinking, 'Oh, I did not perform this duty so nicely. I should have done it this way,' then you will improve. Our love for Kṛṣṇa keeps growing as long as we think that we are not doing the most for Kṛṣṇa and that we must

do more. This is humbleness. If you think, "Oh, I did this so wonderfully. I am such a nice and sincere devotee," then this is not good. There will be no improvement."

If, in questioning, anyone brought up the names and philosophies of famous contemporary Māyāvādīs, Prabhupāda would become angry. He was adamantly against the mission of the Māyāvādīs, who deny the absolute reality of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda expressed that they had greatly damaged the original Vedic culture by spreading misleading doctrines. One time Mālatī brought up the subject of certain Māyāvādī teachings, and Prabhupāda, as usual, argued strongly. Afterwards Upendra chastised Mālatī, saying that she shouldn't have brought it up because Prabhupāda was still recuperating in his health. In his excitement his blood pressure might rise too much. Mālatī was silent, but later gave Upendra a letter to be delivered to Prabhupāda. "What have you said to Mālatī," Prabhupāda asked after reading her letter, "that now she no longer feels she can come before me?" Upendra explained how he had corrected her for inciting Prabhupāda too much. It was nonsense, Prabhupāda said, and he told Upendra to apologize to her.

Uddhava confided to Kim that he felt left out because he never had any questions to ask Prabhupāda. Kim encouraged him. One night Uddhava finally asked, but it was a strange question. "Swamiji," said Uddhava, "what is Rādhārāṇī's relationship with Kṛṣṇa's brother, Balarāma?"

Prabhupāda was annoyed: "Why are you asking that? You don't even understand the basic principle of the Bhagavad-gītā. You don't understand the nature of the soul and the Supersoul or Kṛṣṇa and devotional service, and yet you are asking questions like this?" For a long while Uddhava didn't ask again.

Shortly after Prabhupāda's arrival he continued the process of initiating disciples. Kim and his younger sister were initiated at the same time. A few days before, Kim had suggested his sister should go to Prabhupāda's apartment and ask to be his disciple.

"Are you following the four rules?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Yes," she replied. And then he said it was all right.

"I just wanted to say something else," she continued, "that is, I heard that you had taken birth because in your last life you had been a physician and had killed a snake for some medical purpose."

Prabhupāda laughed. "Oh, your brother has told you that?"

"Yeah," she replied. No more was said about it. Kim was given the name Kṛṣṇadāsa, and Prabhupāda also initiated a few disciples who had written from New York. He performed the initiation ceremony in the temple and chanted on everyone's beads, including the New York disciples'. That night he also spoke for a few moments on the telephone with Brahmānanda in New York and told him, "I have returned by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, and I am now fit to serve you."

Prabhupāda said he was fit to serve the devotees, and he certainly looked and acted wonderfully. But he was still feeling the effects of his stroke of half a year ago. There was a persistent ringing

sound, like a bell, in his head, and he couldn't sleep more than three hours at night and one in the day. But he pushed on as always. He even wrote a letter to a disciple pointing out that although he had disturbance in his head, he was continuing to work on the transcendental plane; and he advised his disciples to do likewise.

Prabhupāda again took up his translating of the Third Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which he had put aside for half a year. Living in the same house with the brahmacārīs, he would wake before any of them and work at his translating. Then after they rose around five, they would hear him ringing a bell in his room, and they would smell incense. Because of their proximity, the boys would often drop by his room. They would watch Prabhupāda sitting at his desk, fresh from his morning shower. He would meticulously place several tiny spoonfuls of water in his left palm and then rub a ball of Vṛndāvana clay into his palm, making the mixture for Vaiṣṇava tilaka. Using a hand mirror, he would artistically make the markings of tilaka—first on his forehead and then on eleven other parts of the body—as directed by the Vaiṣṇava smṛti. Prabhupāda would then hold his brāhmaṇa thread and silently say the Gāyatrī mantras, while facing the pictures of Kṛṣṇa he had on a little altar.

One day, while sitting with Prabhupāda in the morning, Upendra mentioned that the brahmacārīs put their tilaka on while in the bathroom.

“No,” said Prabhupāda, “tilaka should be put on in front of Kṛṣṇa, like this.”

“Well,” Upendra said, “here I've seen them putting it on in the bathroom.”

“Do not worry too much about the rules and regulations. Just get everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

One thing Prabhupāda liked about California was that it was easy for him to obtain eucalyptus twigs there. Prabhupāda used them for brushing his teeth in the morning. He liked them cut the thickness of the little finger and about six inches long, and they were soaked in water overnight before he used them. At this time Kṛṣṇadāsa was going out in the morning to pick them. He would keep a good supply wrapped up in tin foil in the refrigerator. Hearing that eucalyptus trees were uncommon in America, Prabhupāda had asked Kṛṣṇadāsa to send him a supply wherever he traveled.

These sometimes small and domestic dealings of Prabhupāda with his disciples may be seen by someone outside of devotional service as of little consequence, but to the devotee they are always important, because the devotee holds the pleasure of his spiritual master as the supreme value in life. If the spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa's representative, is pleased by even a little service, then that means that Kṛṣṇa is pleased. For the most part, Prabhupāda's disciples simply knew that they loved him, loved serving him, and felt great satisfaction and bliss when he showed his pleasure with them.

Govinda dāśī: He needed some house slippers. I saw that. So I went and bought him some house slippers. He told me he wore size eight. I got him some all-man-made slippers in San Francisco. They were black with red fluffy, furry lining, so that they were easy to slip on the feet. Whenever he would walk around the house you could hear this nice little shuffling sound. He would have his hands behind his back and his head held high.

Although some of the devotees had their own idea that Prabhupāda should go on a special diet, he didn't think much of it. He wanted his regular prasādam—dāl, rice, capātīs, and sabjī. Upendra was regularly cooking these staples. But one day Yamunā came into the kitchen and asked Upendra if she could cook a special lunch for Prabhupāda. He stepped back and allowed her. Yamunā was learning the art of Indian cooking. She made extra preparations, sour, spicy, and sweet. Upendra brought in the tray as usual, without any comment. A few moments later Prabhupāda rang his bell, calling for Upendra.

"Who has made this prasādam?" Prabhupāda asked, looking up as he sat on a cushion before a small table which held his lunch.

"Yamunā-devī cooked it, Swamiji," said Upendra.

"I do not want such fancy things," said Prabhupāda. "I want to eat simply. A little rice, a little dāl, like that." He wasn't very pleased with the special feast; he was used to eating the same simple thing every day. Upendra continued to cook like that, occasionally creating variety by cooking kichrī and fried eggplant in cuddy sauce once a week. But Upendra was also extravagant. Prabhupāda confided to Gaurasundara, "That Upendra is using too much ghee, so that I cannot taste the prasādam before it slips down my throat. It is too slippery."

One of the devotees who had been with Prabhupāda in India wrote that Swamiji should not be given sweets. Prabhupāda didn't think much of that either, as he had introduced coconut laḍḍus on the first evening of his return.

Upendra: He gave us the recipe that you grate the coconut and cook it in a pot, along with some sugar and camphor, and cook it and cook it until it comes to a certain thickness, and then it can be squeezed into balls and offered in this way. So he was giving this instruction to me, and I was following. The stove was an old-fashioned type that allowed for one half of the stove to be covered with a safety cover. While I cooked, Prabhupāda leaned against the corner of the stove with his elbows, his chin resting in his hands, and he leaned and watched me stir. He got up and walked away and then came back, just like a restless young boy. He walked around the kitchen and then returned to look into the pot, stirring it to see if it was done. He asked, "Is it done? I think it's done. It must be done. Let us try." I took the substance out, and although it was still hot, we began squeezing it into balls. As soon as one ball was squeezed, Prabhupāda took it and popped it into his mouth. He turned away from the stove and, shaking his head pleasingly, said, "Yes, it is done. Very nice."

Prabhupāda spontaneously showed his displeasure also. That was the risk of serving him closely as his personal servant or cook. One day Govinda dāsī was cooking a cereal for Prabhupāda's breakfast when he walked past the kitchen, looked in, and asked, "What are you cooking?"

"I am making cereal, Swamiji," she replied.

"But today is Ekādaśī," said Prabhupāda.

"Oh, thank you, Swamiji. I didn't know." She thought that by his reminder she had not actually done anything wrong. After all, neither he nor anyone else had eaten the grains. But Prabhupāda began to criticize her with a severity that surprised her. It was a great disqualification on her part, he said, to cook grains on Ekādaśī, the day when devotees fast from all grains. He kept repeating that she had cooked grains on Ekādaśī and described her mistake as very serious; her one mistake seemed to indicate a whole wrong mentality. Govinda dāśī finally felt it was as bad as if she had actually eaten grains, so she fasted entirely for the rest of the day.

Many things had to be done exactly right. When Upendra placed a small amount of salt on Prabhupāda's plate in front of the rice, it made it difficult for Prabhupāda to eat the rice without mixing it in the salt. Prabhupāda mentioned it. But when Upendra did it again the next day, Prabhupāda said, "I told you to put the salt in back of the rice, not in front!" And foregoing his own pleasure, due to his servant's foolishness, Prabhupāda added, "Now give me no more salt." The next day, however, Upendra put salt and pepper in separate containers and placed them beside the plate so Prabhupāda could move them as he liked. Prabhupāda accepted them silently. Whenever a mistake was rectified, he seemed to immediately forget the wrong.

The śāstras enjoin, "One can never know the mind of the ācārya." Since this is true, then how can we know Prabhupāda? How can we share his inner life in those pleasant homecoming days of December 1967 and January 1968 in San Francisco? In one sense we cannot. As Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja says, "I do not know the deep meaning of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's activities. As far as possible I shall try to explain them externally." But sometimes Prabhupāda reveals himself directly in his own words: "I have returned by Kṛṣṇa's grace. I am fit to serve you." We can enter his thoughts through his spoken words. Through those who knew him and lived with him, we have another intimate approach to Prabhupāda's life. How they saw him and how they dealt with him—often this is as close as we can get.

Mukunda: It was in this period that Prabhupāda went to visit Mr. B. K. Nehru, who was a big Indian government official. I drove Prabhupāda to the St. Francis Hotel in a beat-up old Ford with the name Kṛṣṇa stenciled in multicolors in three different places on the car. The St. Francis Hotel, of course, is a very elite hotel. We arrived at the front door and there was a doorman. I got out and asked him if we could leave the car in front of the hotel for about fifteen minutes. Somehow, I don't know why, he immediately agreed to look after the car. We went up to one of the top floors of the building to a very beautiful suite. Mr. Nehru greeted us. He was wearing Western clothes. I was also wearing Western clothes, and my head wasn't shaved. Mr. Nehru's wife was also there. I sat on the same couch as Prabhupāda, with Mr. Nehru in the middle and Prabhupāda on the other end.

In the beginning they spoke English. Prabhupāda reiterated some of his past life history and mentioned that he had had a pharmacy called Prayag Pharmacy. He had met Mr. Nehru in India, and Mr. Nehru acknowledged that he knew about the pharmacy. Prabhupāda then explained how he had taken sannyāsa. I noted that Prabhupāda was very warm and friendly. It was a side of him that I had never seen before. Not that he hadn't been warm and friendly, but to a nondevotee person, I had never seen him quite in such a friendly attitude. I was totally intrigued to see how open and almost intimate Prabhupāda was becoming with this man. I noticed that Prabhupāda was presenting himself as a mendicant, a sannyāsī.

And then the rest of the conversation took place in Hindi. It was a wonderful time for me to observe the facial expressions and gestures and the great depth of feeling with which Prabhupāda communicated, because I had to try to guess what he was talking about. In fact, I was always speculating on what he might be saying. Then of course Mr. Nehru and sometimes his wife would interject remarks—all in Hindi. I was spinning enormous fantasies about what they all might be talking about. Prabhupāda had introduced me as Michael Grant, secretary, and I was sitting on top of the world from the beginning of the conversation. I felt that I had a stake in the conversation, that maybe Mr. Nehru is not aware that I am not understanding. I was very tuned in to the mood of the conversation even though I was not understanding it, but thinking that maybe I was understanding part of it, and trying to act as if I might know something about what they were saying. At some point in the conversation I was getting very involved in my fantasies of what it was about, and I heard the words missionary work come from Prabhupāda. He stopped and looked at me momentarily—there was a beat, and then the conversation resumed. I then realized that I had really been tuned in by that. Prabhupāda was asking something. Then, later in the conversation, he said in English, “But one word from you,” to Mr. Nehru. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda's eyes opened wide and he paused, and I believe he looked around at me at that time. Then after a somewhat awkward silence, the conversation resumed again. Then I knew that Śrīla Prabhupāda was really asking for a favor and that he was letting me in on this by saying it in English. I felt that all I could do was try to look very serious and important somehow, such that this man would think that by my presence, as an American disciple, he could see that Śrīla Prabhupāda was doing great things by converting us Westerners to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Somehow I wanted to help. But I didn't know what it was, so I couldn't say; and I just tried to play the part that Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed to want me to play in this transcendental game. Then the conversation became very convivial and the subject had changed.

Later the wife of B. K. Nehru came forward and called Prabhupāda “Swamiji” and said something in Hindi and gave him something wrapped in tin foil. It was about the size of a small apple. Then they exchanged words, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was very warm and cordial with Mrs. Nehru. On the way out I asked Prabhupāda first of all what the conversation was about. He was very vague but said it was about some land that he had been trying to get in India, I think in Vṛndāvana. It may have been in litigation, I don't know, but he was asking Mr. Nehru's help. I asked whether he was going to help, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was again rather vague about it, but he indicated that he felt the meeting was successful, or at least a step in the right direction. Then I asked about Mr. Nehru's wife, whether she was European or what, and Prabhupāda said, “No, she is a Parsi.” Then on the ride back Prabhupāda opened the tin foil, and in it was a huge date, the biggest one I have ever seen in my life. And he took it out and took a big bite out of it and then offered me the rest, which I took, of course!

Mukunda was also present with Prabhupāda in his room, along with a small group of devotees, when an earthquake took place. The telephone poles and wires began moving outside the window. The building trembled. No one said anything until Prabhupāda said, “What is this?” A devotee replied, “It's an earthquake, Swamiji.” Prabhupāda said, “Oh.” And then the earthquake suddenly stopped. Everyone present was very intent on Prabhupāda's reaction. He said, “We can just sit down and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

He recounted the bombing of Calcutta during the war. "I was in the bomb shelter, and the bombs were falling; and I was thinking as I was chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa that if I had to die now, it would be wonderful to die while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa." Mukunda and the other devotees felt secure being in Prabhupāda's presence, even during the earthquake. They felt that no matter what catastrophe might happen, they could simply sit with him and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and be happy.

When Prabhupāda had first returned from India, he had criticized Mukunda for failing to obtain the permanent residency status for him. Mukunda had only been able to obtain a temporary visitor's visa. "Why did you do this?" Prabhupāda had asked him sharply. Mukunda made a few excuses, and Prabhupāda replied, "You do not understand." Later Prabhupāda and Mukunda visited a local immigration office to seek the permanent residency status. The official who met with them was a woman. In the course of the routine conversation, Prabhupāda briefly mentioned the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The woman remarked, "It must be very difficult to follow such a discipline in your life."

Prabhupāda replied, "No, it is not. It's just a question of remembering God." Then he gave her an example. Just as a woman goes to work and has to think of many different things, yet she never forgets to dress properly, so one has to think of God despite worldly duties. The woman immigration official could understand.

During the conversation, the recent earthquake was mentioned, and the woman said that the building they were in was "earthquake-proof." After the meeting, when Prabhupāda was leaving, he said to Mukunda, "There is no such thing as 'earthquake-proof,'" and he laughed.

Līlāvati: He called me into his room. He was sitting on his bed talking to Mukunda. When I arrived, he stopped speaking with him and turned to me and said, "So how are you liking this Kṛṣṇa consciousness?" And I said, "Oh, Swamiji, my life has changed completely." He bowed his head and said, "Thank you very much." He was very pleased. Then he continued his conversation with Mukunda. He was asking him, "So, Mukunda, you have cast so many pairs of karatālas from the ones I have brought, but I do not see any of the devotees with them." I chimed in and said, "Oh, Swamiji, that is because he is charging money." This was my conception of spiritual life—no eating, no money, nothing, everything *neti neti neti*. So Prabhupāda said, "Oh, charging money is bad?" I was surprised. He said, "You must understand that anything that is used in the service of Kṛṣṇa is not bad. It is good. Money is not bad if it is used in the proper way." This was my first lesson in real renunciation, real spiritual life. He then asked me to edit the first volume of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, correcting punctuation and grammar. I was so thrilled and enthusiastic. After leaving his room very shortly after we spoke, I immediately began work. I was extremely excited about doing it.

Līlāvati's main occupation was taking care of her baby daughter, Subhadrā. She would treasure different incidents in which Prabhupāda showed attention to her daughter. The first time he saw Subhadrā on returning from India, he said, "She is very fortunate." And he quoted a verse from the Bhagavad-gītā to the effect that the yogī who does not complete his practice has a chance to be born in a family of pious brāhmaṇas. Another time, noticing that Subhadrā was sleepy in his presence, Prabhupāda remarked laughingly, "Yes, young children and old men must take a lot of rest." He also held the child several times and played with her. One time, when speaking to a roomful of people, Prabhupāda suddenly told Līlāvati, that her daughter was very warm and that she should

take off her sweater. He had been speaking on a philosophical topic and had interrupted himself. Others in the room were taken aback to see that Prabhupāda was concerned about such a small child. When Prabhupāda was leaving in a car to go to a speaking engagement, Līlāvati handed him a garland of narcissus flowers through the window of the car. He lowered his head in a humble way and said, "Thank you very much." She then handed him three narcissus flowers that had not been used in the garland. He took them and said, "Oh? And this is from your daughter?" Līlāvati laughed and said, "Yes, Swamiji," and he said, "Oh, very nice." Such thoughtful and clever remarks from Prabhupāda about her daughter totally encouraged Līlāvati's Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Kṛṣṇadāsa: He was continually working on the Bhāgavatam and would make dictaphone tapes that he would send to Satsvarūpa every other day in Boston. I remember one morning as I was going to work, Govinda dāsī gave me this little package that was a tape with Satsvarūpa's address in Boston, and she asked me to mail it on my way to work. The address was on one side, and the stamps were on the other. Every day when I went to work, Prabhupāda left his door open. So whenever I would go to work, I would pay my obeisances, or sometimes as I was walking by he would see me and ask me to come in, and he would give me a little prasādam. He would say, "Oh, you are off to work now? Good. I am glad you are steady." Then in the evening I would get off the train, which would stop right at Willard Street. Prabhupāda's room overlooked the streetcar stop. Sometimes I would get off the streetcar, and Prabhupāda would be looking down at me from his room, so I would pay my obeisances right there in the street, and he would nod. I would come in, and he would ask how the day was. So our relationship was very personal. I was never afraid of asking him if I had any difficulties. So when I was asked by Govinda dāsī to mail this tape, I stopped in Prabhupāda's room and told him that I noticed that the stamps were on one side and the address was on the other. "Are you sure there won't be any difficulty in the mailing?" I asked. He said, "No, no, there won't be any difficulty. I've done it before." So I went out and I was getting ready when I noticed that the thing was stapled. I had been mailing jewelry all my life, and I never sent anything with staples—always a string or something in case the staples fell off. So again I knocked on the door and said, "Swamiji, I've got to apologize, I don't mean to disturb you, but it's stapled. Are you sure it doesn't have to be tied?" I was trying to be helpful, not critical. Maybe I was a little overly confident. So Swamiji said, "No, no, it's all right." So I left. As I was putting my jacket on I saw that about two inches of the envelope was unstapled and the tape was open to view. You could actually squeeze the thing, and although it couldn't fall out, it was visible. So I walked back in the room and paid my obeisances and said, "Swamiji, you can see the tape inside." Prabhupāda immediately hit his hand on the table loudly and yelled, "The spiritual master is never at fault! And even if he is, it's your duty as his disciple to do whatever he asks." He went on for at least half an hour about how one should be very observant of what the spiritual master says and not criticize. It was like he was saying, "I will be your spiritual master, and I will instruct you, but what can I do if you won't take my advice?"

Kṛṣṇadāsa also got a chance to shave Prabhupāda's head. Not many of the devotees in those days wore the Vaiṣṇava śikhā, the tuft of hair at the back of the head. Prabhupāda had very little hair, but he did have a śikhā about three inches in diameter at the back of his head. Thinking that only the disciples wore the śikhā, Kṛṣṇadāsa shaved off Prabhupāda's śikhā. But Prabhupāda only mentioned it mildly: "Oh, you have cut off my śikhā." On another occasion while shaving Prabhupāda's head, Kṛṣṇadāsa cut him, but Prabhupāda didn't notice it. He was chanting the whole while. But when Upendra came in and saw a bit of blood on Prabhupāda's head, he exclaimed. Prabhupāda said, "What? What?" and put his hand to his head. "Oh, you've cut me," said

Prabhupāda. But that was all he said. Upendra later told Kṛṣṇadāsa that he had committed a great offense. That evening Kṛṣṇadāsa went to Prabhupāda and mentioned the cut. "There is not difficulty," said Prabhupāda. "You are just a little young yet. Young don't have a steady hand."

There is a saying in India that a mother teaches her daughter-in-law by teaching her daughter. In other words, the mother will most readily give corrective instruction to her own daughter, but the instruction will apply equally to the less accessible daughter-in-law. Similarly, Prabhupāda gave many instructions not only during class lectures but in daily dealings with his servants, such as Upendra. Any exchanges with the ācārya are themselves teachings both by precept and example, and the whole world can benefit from hearing them.

With Upendra, Prabhupāda's instructions were often in response to Upendra's mistakes. Upendra followed Prabhupāda everywhere. Once they were walking downstairs on the way to the temple, and Upendra, walking behind, called out to Prabhupāda to get his attention. Prabhupāda turned around on the stairs, raised his cane, and said, "I told you never to call from behind." On the way back from the temple, Upendra was supposed to carry Prabhupāda's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, eyeglasses, and karatālas. One evening Upendra got sidetracked talking with a guest, and when he returned to the house, Prabhupāda was waiting for him. Govinda dāśī warned Upendra that Prabhupāda was angry at having to walk back to the house alone. Uttering apologies, Upendra entered his room. Prabhupāda said, "Whenever you are to do something, do it nicely. Do not be irresponsible." One day Upendra was looking for Prabhupāda within the apartment, and he went into Govinda dāśī's room to ask her where Prabhupāda was. As Upendra left Govinda dāśī's room, he met Prabhupāda coming down the hall. Later Prabhupāda called him and told, "You are a brahmācārī. You should not be in the same room alone with Govinda dāśī or any girl. Do not do like that in the future."

When Govinda dāśī had to go to the doctor, Upendra, although having no experience, whimsically volunteered to take dictation from Prabhupāda as Prabhupāda answered his letters. Prabhupāda began to dictate quickly, and Upendra immediately ran into trouble trying to write down his words. At the end of the letter, Prabhupāda asked him to reread it, but Upendra couldn't read his own handwriting because it had been scribbled with such speed. Prabhupāda looked at him incredulously, saying, "Why do you do things like that? You cannot read your own handwriting?" Upendra attempted to read but could not, and Prabhupāda had to fill in the whole letter again, while Upendra wrote in the words that he had missed or could not read.

One of Upendra's regular duties was to crush up rock sugar candy, which Prabhupāda took in water as medicine. One evening, while Prabhupāda watched him, Upendra put the crushed sugar candy in water and mixed it by pouring the water from one glass to another. Somehow a glass slipped from his hand, and in trying to catch it, he splashed it all over his head, face, and the front of his body. Prabhupāda looked at him and simply said, "Go wash."

"No, no," Upendra protested. "Let me finish making your medicine for you." As he continued his work, the sugar water thickened, leaving his hands, face, and arms sticky as the sugar hardened and crystalized. Prabhupāda said nothing, but watched and accepted the service of his foolish but sincere disciple.

Perhaps certain activities cannot be called instructions; they are simply *līlā*.

Upendra: At the Willard Street apartment, Prabhupāda would sometimes go out on the back porch. It was very small and wasn't meant for walking, just for going down the back stairs two levels. But the people in the apartment below us had a little Pekingese dog that would bark at anyone who would come out above. The dog would run up the stairs to the next platform below and yap away with a shrill bark. Prabhupāda would go out and stand on the little porch, inciting the dog's barking, and then ignore the dog. Then all of a sudden he would turn to the dog, raise his hands, and make a scary face. The Pekingese would become very frightened and would whimper and run down the stairs, while Prabhupāda would laugh. He did this a number of times, like a young boy.

SPL 57: Opening a Temple in Los Angeles

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Opening a Temple

in Los Angeles

= Los Angeles January 6, 1968

The building at 5364 West Pico Boulevard was a small storefront in a middle-class black neighborhood of Los Angeles. With his key, Aniruddha opened the rear door, and Śrīla Prabhupāda entered, followed by a few disciples.

The room was stark. A Brijabasi print of Lord Kṛṣṇa sat atop the altar, which was no more than two orange crates covered with an old madras. A tamboura and a mṛdaṅga on end stood in one corner, and a curtain hung over the front window. Prabhupāda's seat, a simple raised platform, was the only furniture.

Prabhupāda, dressed in saffron robes and walking with a cane, crossed the room, opened the front door, and stepped outside. Glancing up and down the street, he saw small, run-down houses. It was a quiet, out-of-the-way neighborhood, unlike the more vital locations his disciples had found in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury and Manhattan's Lower East Side. But it was a place in Los Angeles, a start.

Prabhupāda stepped back inside and shut the door. Aniruddha, Dayānanda, his wife Nandarāṇī, and their three-week-old daughter Candramukhī were there—the members of the Los Angeles temple. Several other devotees who had driven down a few days earlier from San Francisco were also there and stood anxiously around Prabhupāda, waiting to hear what he would say.

Prabhupāda looked around carefully. "All right," he said, "let us have kīrtana. And picking up the mṛdaṅga, he sat down on the small platform while his disciples sat down before him on the floor.

No sooner had he begun to play, however, when Jānakī rushed over to him, carrying the tamboura. "Swamiji," she said, "you can't play the drum! You're not well enough! Play this." Her reprimand

was motherly. Prabhupāda was seventy-two and only six months ago had been hospitalized after a heart attack and stroke. He had only recently returned from India, where he had gone to recuperate. Naturally his disciples were concerned about his health.

"All right." Prabhupāda smiled, trading instruments with Jānakī. "Then I will play tamboura."

As Śrīla Prabhupāda softly plucked the metal strings, his disciples clapped the one-two-three rhythm. Prabhupāda chanted: "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." With his traditional Bengali melody he led the singing, joining with his disciples on the chorus.

As Prabhupāda's disciples sat earnestly chanting before him—some of them looking up to him, others singing with eyes closed—he looked at each disciple. Nervous, timid Aniruddha was there; he blushed easily, and his bespectacled eyes squinted when he smiled. Tall, lean Dayānanda was there; he had a good job as a computer technician for RCA, and he was giving two hundred dollars monthly to support the temple he and his wife had started.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had been in India when Dayānanda and Nandarāṇī had moved to Los Angeles and found this little storefront. Immediately, they had written to him about the new "temple" and the warm, sunny Los Angeles climate, which they said would be good for his health. He had expressed his eagerness to join them.

I am pleased that our desire is fulfilled by the Grace of Lord Krishna. Your specific duty is to chant and hear the transcendental Name of the Lord, read some passages from my English version of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (Gitopanisad) and explain them as far as possible as you have heard from me. Any devotee who has developed genuine love for Krishna can also explain the truth about Krishna because Krishna helps such sincere devotee seated in his heart.

Dayānanda and Nandarāṇī had written to Prabhupāda that people in Los Angeles weren't as receptive as in San Francisco and New York, but Prabhupāda had assured them that if they chanted with devotion, success would come. Kṛṣṇa would help them.

In his room at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda had meditated on sending young men and women like Dayānanda and Nandarāṇī all over the world to open Kṛṣṇa conscious centers. Despite old age and ill health, this was his life's ambition, his single dominating desire. And in whatever time he had left, he wanted to establish the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement worldwide. His success in America over the past two years had given him hope. Mukunda had begun a temple in San Francisco, Kīrtanānanda had begun one in Montreal, Satsvarūpa in Boston, Subala in Santa Fe, and Brahmānanda had stayed in New York. These temples were storefronts only, and the leaders young, inexperienced men. But the Western youth were showing interest. There was great potential.

After the kīrtana, Dayānanda drove Prabhupāda to his apartment two miles away. It was small—a front room, a kitchenette, a back room with a tiny bathroom—and noisy. Aniruddha had arranged for Gaurasundara and his wife, Govinda dāsī, who were acting as Prabhupāda's servant and secretary, to stay in the front room.

* * *

Prabhupāda said his health was still not good. His sleep was often disturbed, and he spoke of a “gong-gong-gong” sound in his head. He had occasional headaches and a ringing in his left ear. An Ayur-vedic doctor in India had told him to take cinnamon buds, and he had seen a doctor in San Francisco. But the doctors' prescriptions had not helped.

I may inform you in that connection that I am at the present moment physically unfit; I am having always a buzzing sound in my brain. I cannot sleep at night, but still I am working because I try to be on my position of spiritual platform.

Prabhupāda was in good spirits, however, despite his age and lingering sickness. He appeared strong, and six months in India had tanned him a golden, healthy hue. He always sat straight and smiled often. He walked with a cane, yet upright, with a quick step, tiring his young disciples who attempted to keep up with him. He even mentioned that if his inability to sleep continued, he would have more time for writing his books.

Gone was the mindlessness of his young followers who had previously thought that Swamiji, because he was a pure devotee, should be let to do any strenuous activities he liked, working all night or singing and playing the mṛdaṅga for hours in the park. Now the devotees had become concerned and protective, trying always to arrange for his ease, suggesting when they thought something was too strenuous for him. Usually, however, Prabhupāda would give the last word on what he would or would not do. When Yamunā and Jānakī arrived from San Francisco, they decided that if Swamiji were to get well he would require a special diet. So they devised a regimen featuring small servings of boiled vegetables without salt, spices, or ghee. At first Prabhupāda gently submitted to their requests. But on trying their meals, he commented, “These vegetables are nasty. They are not fit for eating.” After three days, when Govinda dāsī told him of some new reductions in his diet, he roared, “Let the starvation committee go to hell! You feed me.”

Again Prabhupāda began taking his regular lunch—dāl, rice, capātīs, and a couple of sabjīs with ghee. One day when Govinda dāsī brought him his lunch, he commented, “Oh, this is very nice. When I was in India everyone told me, ‘Oh, Swamiji, you cannot go to America. You will starve there. They have no food. They eat only meats and potatoes.’ So I said, ‘What is that? I shall live on bread and potatoes. There is no problem. I can survive on bread and potatoes.’ So I was thinking like that when I came to your country—that I shall live on bread and potatoes. But now I have come here, and Kṛṣṇa is so kind. He has not only given me everything in the way of nice food, but you are also cooking all sorts of nice vegetable preparations—capātīs, dāl, rice. Everything is there. So this is Kṛṣṇa's kindness.”

Although when Prabhupāda had first arrived in America he had been alone and had had difficulty finding even a single sincere person, now he was surrounded by sincere students eager to learn from him. Still, he accepted this new position in the same spirit as he had accepted the lonely months in New York City. He was doing his beloved duty to his spiritual master: writing books, seeking to engage others in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness mission, and speaking about Kṛṣṇa always.

Sometimes, as Prabhupāda would shuffle through the apartment in his slippers, he would see Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī seated at the kitchen table practicing their first lessons in the Bengali alphabet. He had given them a Bengali verse from Caitanya-caritāmṛta to memorize, and regularly he would drill them to see if they knew it.

vande śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nityānandausahoditau
gauḍodaye puṣpavantau
citrau śaṁ-dau tamo-nudau*

Looking over their shoulders, Prabhupāda remarked, “This very nice. Just like a child is learning to write. His writing may not be perfect. It may be crooked or imperfect. But the teacher wants to see that the students are trying. It doesn't matter how well they are doing, but just that they are fully engaged. So it is just like our service to Kṛṣṇa. What can we do for Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa is everything. He doesn't need our service. But He wants to see that we are trying—we are trying a little bit to give Him service. That is the whole idea.”

* * *

It was only four days after Prabhupāda's arrival. He had just risen from an afternoon's rest, walked into the front room... and there was Subala. Prabhupāda was surprised. Subala was supposed to be in Santa Fe.

“My wife has left me,” Subala burst out. And a sad tale followed. Subala told how he had left his wife, Kṛṣṇā-devī dāsī, alone at the Santa Fe temple for a few days and gone to New York to visit his parents. Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇā-devī had run away with a boy who had been visiting the temple; and she had decided to stay with him and give up her husband.

“Don't worry,” Prabhupāda told Subala, “everything will be all right. I will write a letter to Kṛṣṇā-devī and tell her to come back to you. You can go back to Santa Fe tomorrow, and everything will be all right.”

Subala left the next morning for Santa Fe, and Prabhupāda, although calm in Subala's presence, began to show deep disturbance over the sordid affair. Kṛṣṇā-devī was his disciple, and he had performed the sacred marriage ceremony for her and Subala. He had asked them to be an ideal couple, cooperating together in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Together they had gone to start the center in New Mexico. “Don't be discouraged,” he told them. “Even though no one may come to hear you, still you chant and hear.” But now Kṛṣṇā-devī had simply left the temple and her husband.

When Subala arrived in Santa Fe, he found that Kṛṣṇādevī and her boyfriend, Randy, had left town. Meanwhile, in Los Angeles Prabhupāda received a letter from Kṛṣṇā-devī. She said she wanted to stay in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—but with her new boyfriend. “This is all nonsense,” Prabhupāda exclaimed. “I will simply go back to Vṛndāvana and sit and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Why should I do

this? Why should I deal with this quarrel between husband and wife? This is not the business of a sannyāsī."

Prabhupāda wrote a letter to Kṛṣṇā-devī in care of the Santa Fe temple.

Your recent activities have been very much upsetting to each and every member of our society. I never expected that you shall act in this way. If you love me at all and Krishna at all, you should immediately return back, either to me or to your husband without delay. In your letter it is understood that you are repenting. You have done a great mistake. Come back and everything will be all right.

To Subala, Prabhupāda wrote,

I am very sorry to learn about your present plight; you must be feeling a great shock for the separation, but there is a great lesson also. Anyway, if you are feeling too heavy-hearted, you may come here and live with me for some time. I hope I shall be able to ease your heaviness.

But before Prabhupāda's letter arrived, Subala had already left Santa Fe for Los Angeles, thinking, "I can't take this anymore. I'm going back to Swamiji."

Sitting on his porch taking his noontime massage, Prabhupāda suddenly saw Subala, looking more miserable than ever, coming up the sidewalk. "Subala," Prabhupāda called out, remaining seated. Subala approached and offered obeisances before Śrīla Prabhupāda, who sat in the California sunshine and dressed only in an Indian gamchā, while Gaurasundara massaged him with mustard oil. "You did not get my letter?" Prabhupāda asked.

"No," Subala replied.

"Yes." Prabhupāda nodded. "You have got my letter. I have written you and told you that if you are feeling too heavyhearted, you may come here and live with me for some time."

Subala: So I moved into the crowded front room of Swamiji's apartment. I slept in the living room, right outside of Swamiji's room, and there was only a curtain separating us. At night I could hear him dictating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

He asked me to carve some Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities for him. I had already carved some Jagannātha deities, and now Swamiji said he wanted Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities carved. So I bought a block of mahogany and began carving Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

* * *

Prabhupāda received word from Rāya Rāma in New York that his editing of the Bhagavad-gītā manuscript was "nearing completion." When Prabhupāda read Rāya Rāma's letter, he exploded: "Nearing completion! I heard this before I started for India." Rāya Rāma's slow editing was delaying the manuscript too much. Although the contract with Macmillan Company had already been signed, the manuscript had still not been submitted. Seeing Rāya Rāma's editing as a perpetual

delay, Prabhupāda decided Rāya Rāma should immediately stop all other duties and come to Los Angeles.

After a few days, Rāya Rāma arrived. He, too, settled into the crowded front room of Swamiji's tiny apartment, picking a corner for himself where he could work on the Bhagavad-gītā manuscript. After having spoken in the temple in Swamiji's presence one night, Rāya Rāma wrote home to the devotees in New York,

Although his health is delicate, he is not to be held back. After all that activity last night, he continued talking to us when we returned, and then got up at two-thirty a.m. this morning and worked for three hours. He just returned now from a two-and-a-half-mile morning walk. So he's not exactly weak or failing. And if we say anything to check him, he tells that this life has no value if it is not used for Krishna. Last week Gargamuni was telling Swamiji that he sometimes dreams of how to sell things, and Swamiji said that he also dreams of preaching. But he told us last night that when he's speaking of Krishna there is no pain.

* * *

One day on a walk, Prabhupāda discovered a special place across the street from his apartment. There on a neighbor's front lawn stood a broad, tall tree. Taking a few disciples with him, Prabhupāda went over and sat down beneath the tree. On a warm Los Angeles afternoon, this was a great but simple luxury, sitting in the pleasant sunny atmosphere beneath the shade tree. Rāya Rāma considered the occasion something to write to the devotees in New York about.

This afternoon I took a stroll to the temple, which is some distance away, and when I returned I found Swamiji crossing the street from his house, accompanied by Gaurasundara. So I trailed them—up close—Swamiji took his seat under a big oak tree which grows close by our house across the street. “Meditation under a tree is very nice,” he said after a few minutes. As we sat there, other devotees came and joined us, all sitting around Swamiji on some unknown person's lawn, under their tree. “Therefore, in former times, sages used to seat themselves under trees and teach.”

...I know that I am a worthless fool. Here I sit at Swamiji's feet, and my tears aren't flowing or my heart breaking with joy. But even for a fool, Swamiji's presence is intoxicating in the extreme.

Swamiji said that saintly persons in India often sat under trees and even lived there with no other shelter. The six Gosvāmīs, who wrote books under the order of Lord Caitanya, lived this way in Vṛndāvana, staying each night under a different tree and compiling sublime Sanskrit literatures. Hearing Swamiji speak on such transcendental subjects in this setting fit perfectly the devotees' ideal notions of the guru beneath an ancient towering banyan tree in India. It didn't seem to them that they were sitting in an ordinary neighborhood of Los Angeles. Often Aniruddha would return to the apartment after shopping or errands, and he would see from afar “this gorgeous-looking, saffron-robed person sitting there on the grassy lawn.”

One day as Subala, Govinda dāsī, Rāya Rāma, and others sat with Prabhupāda in the shade, Prabhupāda observed a pair of white butterflies. “Just see these worms,” he said, pointing to the butterflies. “Here also there is husband and wife. The whole world is in this bondage.”

Knowing Subala was still lamenting, Prabhupāda continued to speak about the topic on both their minds. "It is not so wonderful that Kṛṣṇā-devī has left," he said. "What is wonderful is that we are able to stay and serve Kṛṣṇa. The māyā is so strong. It is Kṛṣṇa's divine energy. And for someone to actually stay engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service is very rare. The living entity is practically helpless under the sway of māyā's power and can only cry out to Kṛṣṇa for help. But we have to pray at every moment that the power of māyā does not disturb us."

Subala continued to live with Prabhupāda, cooking for him, tending to his personal needs, and carving Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhu pāda wrote Kṛṣṇā-devī again.

Your husband Śrīmān Subal das is living with me very peacefully, and he is carving Radha and Krishna from hardwood. So this life of material existence is just like hardwood, and if we can carve Krishna out of it, that is the success of our life. So, at any circumstance, you must not forget Krishna. I love you at my heart and therefore I gave you the name Krishna devi dasi. Don't forget Krishna even for a single moment chant Hare Krishna loudly or slowly as it may be convenient. But don't forget to chant the holy name. I hope everything will be all right as soon as you come here with Randy, and I am awaiting your arrival with great interest.

One day after a walk, Prabhupāda told Aniruddha that Los Angeles reminded him of Bombay and that he wanted to build a very big temple in Los Angeles. Although Aniruddha was not one to endeavor hard for building a big temple, Prabhupāda still told him his vision. Another day Prabhupāda called Aniruddha in and showed him the Deity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that Gaurasundara and Subala had carved. Prabhupāda's eyes were shining. "I want to have Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in everyone's home," he said. Aniruddha was amazed by the joyful expression on Prabhupāda's face.

"What can I do?" Aniruddha asked.

"I want you to go to different foundries and find out the cost of casting Deities."

Aniruddha and Subala then phoned and visited various foundries in the Los Angeles area, returning with information. But their investigations were unbusinesslike and not well thought out. Knowing this, Prabhupāda smiled and asked, "So, what intelligent news do you have for me today?" Aniruddha knew Prabhupāda was criticizing him, but he could only giggle in return. He loved it.

One morning Aniruddha went to see Prabhupāda with what he considered a frightening story. Before dawn he had been out in the park collecting eucalyptus twigs for Prabhupāda to use as toothbrushes. He had been standing on a park bench cutting the branch of a tree with his knife when a police car had suddenly pulled up and a policeman had rushed out of the car. "What are you doing?" the policeman demanded. Aniruddha explained that he was getting toothbrushes for his spiritual master. The policeman had said, "Don't you know that these trees belong to the city? They belong to the people of California." He had said that Aniruddha could be arrested for carrying an open knife. When he had asked Aniruddha what was in the bag around his neck, Aniruddha had shown him his beads. The policeman had then asked if Aniruddha had come from a mental institution.

Prabhupāda smiled to hear the story and inquired, "Did you ask him if he was crazy?"

* * *

Govinda dāsī had been complaining to Aniruddha that Swamiji's apartment was too noisy and crowded and that there were no private bathroom facilities for Swamiji. She kept insisting Aniruddha find a better place. Aniruddha, however, was getting only two hundred dollars a month from Dayānanda, and with Prabhupāda plus so many visitors, there was a financial strain. "Swamiji is very uncomfortable," Govinda dāsī nagged. But Aniruddha didn't know what to do.

When Aniruddha asked Prabhupāda if the place was all right, he said it was. Aniruddha explained that more devotees were eager to visit from San Francisco and would probably want to stay in the apartment. "Personally," Prabhupāda said, "I have no suggestion myself. It is up to them, whatever they decide."

Prabhupāda had his translating to do, but he also wanted to see his disciples. For Aniruddha, however, the prospect of more devotees coming to visit was a cause of anxiety. Finally, he and Dayānanda found a larger apartment for Swamiji.

The new apartment was four rooms over a private garage in the rear of an apartment complex. Aniruddha painted, and some of the other devotees helped prepare the apartment as comfortably as possible for Prabhupāda. Then they moved him in.

The landlord, a small Japanese man, came by and, seeing Prabhupāda seated on the floor behind his trunk, asked, "Where's your furniture?" He seemed suspicious.

Prabhupāda smiled, thanked him, and said it was all right.

"We can sit down anywhere," Prabhupāda explained. "We are mendicant." But after leaving, the landlord kept standing outside on the landing, peeking through the window. "Tell him to go away," Prabhupāda said to Aniruddha.

At the temple during the evening program, Śrīla Prabhupāda would sometimes ask one of his disciples to speak after the kīrtana.

Dayānanda: One night as I was driving Swamiji to the temple, he asked me to speak. I immediately thought I would rather not. Although in Swamiji's absence his other disciples had given talks, I had never given even an informal talk. So I told Swamiji I preferred to hear him speak, but he said he preferred to hear me. So it was settled.

At the temple we had kīrtana as usual, and then I began to speak. I was speaking on the validity of God, trying to prove that God's existence was logical and scientifically reasonable. Such a talk should have been given with reference to the Vedic literature, but my fund of knowledge was not embellished by verses from the scripture, nor was it even adequately based on basic Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy. I was aware that my talk wasn't adequate, a fact that Prabhupāda himself brought home in the sweetest possible way.

When at one point I made a mistake and said the wrong thing altogether, Prabhupāda matter-of-factly interrupted, explaining the point I had misstated. He then motioned me to go on. I continued without any loss of face. I was being corrected in public, but without the embarrassment that a chastisement might cause. Swamiji's correction was always based on love and sincerity—in relation to the goal rather than to the ego.

* * *

On the appearance day of Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Prabhupāda gathered some of his disciples—Aniruddha, Govinda dāsī, Gaurasundara, Nandarāṇī, and a boy named Saṅkarṣaṇa—for a special celebration. In the kitchen of his apartment, Prabhupāda cooked a feast for his spiritual master. Nandarāṇī brought flowers, and Prabhupāda led the devotees in a ceremony of offering flowers and chanting prayers in honor of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

Nandarāṇī: I had my daughter, Candramukhī, with me then. She was about two months old and was sitting very quietly in a little basket in a corner of the room. After the ceremony, Swamiji gathered a handful of flowers, walked over to the basket where Candramukhī was lying, and placed the flowers around her head. He smiled and said, "One day I will take you to India with me."

After the feast the devotees followed Prabhupāda into his room. He sat at his desk and read letters aloud to the small gathering of his disciples seated on the floor before him. The letters were of appreciation. And these letters became Śrīla Prabhupāda's offering to his spiritual master. Prabhupāda read aloud statements like, "We really like chanting," "We're happy since we met you," "We're trying to teach other people how to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa"—simple sentiments.

Reading the letters, Prabhupāda became very happy. He then put the letters along with the flowers before the picture of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Then looking at Nandarāṇī, he asked, "Have you become happy since you have been chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa?"

"Oh, yes," Nandarāṇī replied, "my life is wonderful."

Looking at the others, Prabhupāda asked, "And what about you? Do you feel more satisfied since you have been chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa?" They all answered yes.

"Then I have only one request," Prabhupāda continued. "Whatever happiness you have felt, you simply tell someone else about that. That is all you have to do. You don't need to teach anything. You don't need to teach the philosophy. You just explain to people that because you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa you have become happy, and if they chant, they will become happy. Then I will be satisfied, and my spiritual master will be satisfied."

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As Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the storefront one evening, he was surprised to find Umāpati there to greet him. Umāpati had left Kṛṣṇa consciousness almost a year ago, and Prabhupāda had not seen

him since. Spontaneously, Prabhupāda went forward and embraced Umāpati. A few months before, Umāpati had written, indicating that he was thinking of returning; so his arrival was not a complete surprise to Śrīla Prabhupāda. As Prabhupāda took his seat, he asked Umāpati about the devotees in New York. Briefly Prabhupāda reminisced how he had begun his movement in New York and how boys like Umāpati had helped him.

Later that evening, back at the apartment, Prabhupāda expressed sadness that some of his disciples had left Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He told Umāpati that when the wife of one of the sannyāsī disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had forcibly dragged her husband away, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had shed tears over his inability to save the disciple. A disciple, due to māyā's influence, may fall away, Prabhupāda said, but the spiritual master will never forsake him.

Umāpati had left Kṛṣṇa consciousness because of intellectual doubts. Having been a eclectic follower of Buddhism, he had objected to Prabhupāda's explanations of Buddhism. On leaving Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, he had simply returned to his old job in a radio station, grown back his beard, and reverted to his old habits. "Whenever I saw someone doing something wrong, like eating meat," Umāpati explained to Prabhupāda, "I would think, "My spiritual master said this is bad."

"When you think like that," Prabhupāda said, "your life at once becomes sublime."

Several other devotees entered Prabhupāda's room as Prabhupāda talked. As a person becomes more Kṛṣṇa conscious, Prabhupāda explained, he becomes concerned not to cause suffering to other living beings. He doesn't want to cause suffering, even to a small insect. "Don't you feel?" Prabhupāda asked, imploring them with his eyes to understand the nonviolence of the devotee.

Umāpati had left Kṛṣṇa consciousness because of intellectual doubts. Having been an eclectic follower of Buddhism, as had Dayānanda and Aniruddha, he decided to stay in Los Angeles and help them. He moved into the storefront with Aniruddha, got a job, and began helping support the temple.

Seeing that Prabhupāda was almost constantly occupied by various disciples, Līlāvatī, one of the girls visiting from San Francisco, decided not to take up her spiritual master's time unnecessarily. Prabhupāda noticed her frequent absence from the gatherings at his apartment. When she finally visited him, he asked her, "Why are you not coming?"

"Oh, Swamiji," Līlāvatī said, "you must do your translating work. I don't think you're getting your work done."

"No, you don't know?" Prabhupāda corrected her mistake. "Don't you know my disciples are my work?"

* * *

Prabhupāda said he would go to as many speaking engagements as Aniruddha could obtain. Aniruddha got engagements, but there were many difficulties. On two occasions, Prabhupāda,

Subala, and Aniruddha were on their way to an engagement at a college when their car broke down. Another time, a policeman arrested Subala for not having a driver's license, and Prabhupāda, accompanied by his servant, had to walk back to his apartment. At an engagement at the U.C.L.A. Student Center, not a single student attended; Prabhupāda sat waiting for ten minutes and then turned to Aniruddha: "So, what happened?" At an outdoor engagement at Long Beach State College, there was no seat for Prabhupāda, and Aniruddha had to run and find an umbrella to shade Prabhupāda from the sun. "Aniruddha, this is not very nice," Prabhupāda remarked from the podium.

But there were successes also. Mukunda dāsa arranged for Prabhupāda to appear on national television on the Les Crane Show. He also arranged for Prabhupāda to appear on the Joe Pyne Show, as well as on several radio programs. And Life magazine featured Prabhupāda's picture and an accompanying story as part of an article, "The Year of the Guru."

Although Aniruddha was prepared to arrange preaching engagements for Prabhupāda for as long as he would stay, the devotees in San Francisco, New York, Montreal, and Boston had repeatedly asked Prabhupāda to visit them. He had gone to India in July 1967, returning to San Francisco December 14. He had stayed in San Francisco three weeks and in Los Angeles two months. So while his disciples in San Francisco and Los Angeles had seen him, the others had been waiting for more than eight months. It was time to move on.

On March 7, the day Prabhupāda left Los Angeles, he thanked Aniruddha for his service in maintaining the center.

"Despite my ill health," he said, "I was very comfortably situated. Kṛṣṇa will bless you."

"Actually, what did I do?" Aniruddha replied. "Everything was a mistake. All the engagements were messed up."

"No," Prabhupāda said, "that's all right. You tried your best."

As Prabhupāda was leaving for the airport, he had to walk from his apartment to the car. It was raining, and he had no umbrella or raincoat. Govinda dāsī frantically ran into the bathroom, tore down the shower curtain, and wrapped it around her spiritual master to protect him from the rain.

Prabhupāda had unlimited plans for expansion—a big city like Los Angeles deserved a big temple, organized distribution of books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and sophisticated cultural programs. And there should be Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in every home. Yet while enthusiastically planning to make everyone and everything Kṛṣṇa conscious, Prabhupāda waited patiently to see if a stray disciple like Kṛṣṇā-devī would return. Prabhupāda was ready to appear on television or meet boldly with any challenger or travel anywhere in the world, and yet he allowed Govinda dāsī to cover him with a shower curtain against the rain.

The Los Angeles temple would become a great Kṛṣṇa conscious success only with hard work and sincerity. And that, Prabhupāda knew, would take time. His disciples were not yet so well trained as to make formidable advances for Kṛṣṇa against the forces of māyā. Yet by his staying for two

months in Los Angeles, he was strengthening his disciples' Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And they would continue to progress. ISKCON L.A. was now a little stronger. A few devotees were going to stay and help. He would come back when they had done more.

* * *

San Francisco

March 8, 1968

Śrīla Prabhupāda flew from Los Angeles to San Francisco. After the slower pace of the Los Angeles center, the activities in San Francisco encouraged Prabhupāda.

I think San Francisco center has been very much sanctified by unalloyed devotional service of the members here. As soon as there are sincere devotees, immediately the situation changes favorably.

The morning and evening meetings drew crowds of interested young people, and Śrīla Prabhupāda observed: "Dancing in ecstasy is often exhibited to the transcendental pleasure of everyone present."

Prabhupāda was witnessing the success of the saṅkīrtana movement. He had planted the seed, and now the plant of kṛṣṇa-bhakti was flowering. To revisit a center and see that his disciples, by sincerely following his orders, were advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness increased Prabhupāda's bliss and satisfaction. He was witnessing the power of kīrtana to transform the fallen souls. And to see his smile of approval increased the ecstasy of the devotees.

Guru dāsa showed Prabhupāda slides of the Kṛṣṇa Deity Prabhupāda had named Kartāmīśana. One picture showed Kartāmīśana shortly after the devotees had obtained Him from an import store and placed Him in the temple. Other slides showed Kartāmīśana after the devotees had been regularly worshiping Him and offering Him food. As Prabhupāda viewed the slides, he began to chuckle. "I think the Deity has changed."

Guru dāsa reviewed the slides. Sure enough, Kartāmīśana had become bluer and plumper. "Has He been painted or anything?" Umāpati asked. Guru dāsa said they hadn't done anything to Him.

"You have been taking care of Him," Prabhupāda affirmed.

Bhakti-yoga was a scientific law; as one approached Kṛṣṇa, He reciprocated. Wherever Prabhupāda's disciples were following the process carefully, he saw the improvement. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he said, was a treatment of the diseased soul by medicine and diet. The medicine was chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and the diet was prasādam. If one followed this program, he would be rejuvenated; if one neglected it, he would relapse. Śrīla Prabhupāda found both health and illness.

Upendra, Prabhupāda's personal servant in San Francisco, came before Prabhupāda crying. He said he couldn't overcome his sex urge. He had engaged in illicit sex. When he asked if Kṛṣṇa forgives offenses, Prabhupāda consoled him: "Yes, Kṛṣṇa forgives." Upendra asked if he could overcome his

lust by getting married. "No, you are too young," Prabhupāda said. "You should stay away from rich food. Eat starvishly." He told Upendra to take unsiced dāl and capātīs without butter.

After a few weeks in San Francisco, Śrīla Prabhupāda flew to New York, where the devotees greeted him with a grand airport reception. A city newspaper ran an article "Guru Returns." The New York center at 26 Second Avenue had improved, and there were new faces and enthusiastic kīrtanas.

Here are many new flowerlike young boys and girls, and they are all so much interested in Krishna consciousness very seriously. I am surprised at their great enthusiasm, and I am very happy amongst them.

Prabhupāda stayed in his old rooms at 26 Second Avenue. Although there had been talk of getting him another residence, everything had been too expensive. Prabhupāda had assured Brahmānanda, "I would like to stay in my apartment. If it is silent and solitary I feel pleasure to live there, better than elsewhere." Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's plans were to stay in New York less than two weeks, he talked of staying longer—if his disciples could arrange for him to work steadily at his translating and would help him publish his books one after another. Prabhupāda had written Brahmānanda,

I want to sit down tightly with some assistants and spend the rest of my time translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and other books. And train students to do preaching on the outside. So, from now on, I would like to speak only at very important engagements, and for most engagements, have my students preach. All of you must learn to preach; and for me, my most important preaching work is to finish up the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. So please try to make arrangement like this, as it is very important that my books be finished, as soon as possible.

One day, while Prabhupāda was sitting in his room receiving his massage, he began talking and laughing. As he sat on the floor with one leg tucked under his body and one leg outstretched before him, he told the two or three devotees present how Kṛṣṇa, carrying the lunch His mother had packed for Him, would go to the forest with His cowherd boyfriends, who were also carrying lunches from home. Kṛṣṇa and His friends would all sit together sharing their lunch, and Kṛṣṇa always had the best laḍḍus and kachaurīs. Prabhupāda's eyes flashed, and he rubbed his hands together, smiling. "I simply want to go to Kṛṣṇaloka, so I can have some of Kṛṣṇa's laḍḍu and kachaurīs. I do not have any great diversion from this. I simply want to go there so that I can enjoy eating laḍḍus and kachaurīs with Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys." Opening his eyes widely, he glanced at Devānanda, who was massaging him, and at the others in the room. "Oh," he said to them, "if you will give me laḍḍus and kachaurīs, then I will bless you."

"Swamiji, please teach us how to make laḍḍus and kachaurīs," the devotees replied excitedly. "We will definitely make them for you!"

"Yes," Prabhupāda assured them, "I shall show you. I shall teach you." And he went on talking in a jovial way.

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Newcomers in New York wanted to be initiated. One boy had seen Prabhupāda's picture in Life magazine, cut it out, and put it in his high school locker. A boy named Jay, after having read about Prabhupāda and the devotees in Evergreen Review, had visited the temple and found that everyone was devoted to Prabhupāda. Some disciples whom Prabhupāda had initiated by mail—like Indirā and Ekāyanī, two sisters still in high school and living at home—were meeting their spiritual master for the first time. Prabhupāda initiated all the eligible newcomers.

The day before Prabhupāda left for Boston, he lectured at the New York State University at Stonybrook, a two-hour drive from the temple.

Brahmānanda: The engagement was in a huge auditorium with rows of seats. And the house was full. The bleachers were completely packed when we came in. It was dark, just some spotlights on us and everything else was dark. The rows of seats went back and up, and we could hardly see the audience. First we held kīrtana and then Prabhupāda spoke. As Prabhupāda was speaking, we could hear the sound of chairs popping up as the students were getting up and leaving. But Prabhupāda just went right on lecturing, as if he weren't aware of it. By the time the lecture was over, there were only about two dozen people left.

After the program, the devotees discovered that the car Prabhupāda was supposed to ride in had already left. A student stepped forward, however, and offered his Triumph sports car, a tiny two-seater. Prabhupāda didn't like the car, but it was the only thing available. So Brahmānanda drove Prabhupāda back to Manhattan.

Around midnight, Prabhupāda dozed while Brahmānanda speeded, hurrying to get back to the temple as soon as possible. Prabhupāda was dozing peacefully when Brahmānanda hit a large pothole, and Prabhupāda struck his head on the metal bar on the roof of the car.

When finally they returned to the Lower East Side it was past midnight, and there would only be a few hours for resting before Prabhupāda would have to catch his 9:00 A.M. flight to Boston. Although Prabhupāda rose that morning on schedule, most of the devotees were still asleep when he left his apartment. At the airport Prabhupāda commented that his disciples, rather than simply praising him, should try to follow his example and rise early.

SPL 58: A Visit to Boston

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

A Visit to Boston

= Boston

May 1968

The apartment was near the elevated train line in a rough lower-class neighborhood of Boston. But it was the best Subhadrā could afford. Just before Śrīla Prabhupāda had left for India on July 24,

1967, he had sent Satsvarūpa here to Boston, affectionately rubbing his hand up and down Satsvarūpa's back as a blessing.

At first Satsvarūpa had been alone, working full time at the Welfare Department, hoping to find a storefront suitable for a center. Then Hamsāduta and his wife, Himāvatī, had joined him, as had Jadurāṇī, who had been having difficulty doing her artwork in the New York temple. Hamsāduta cooked, Himāvatī helped him and did the housecleaning, Jadurāṇī painted, and Satsvarūpa went to his job. On Sundays they would chant on the Boston Commons.

In September Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote from Vṛndāvana, expressing pleasure that even in his absence his disciples had opened a Kṛṣṇa consciousness center in Boston. "Physically I may be present or not," he wrote, "but the work must continue... Kindly make the Boston center very nice." He closed, "The prospect there is very good due to the large number of students."

The Boston devotees considered Prabhupāda's letter very important, and as they studied and quoted the letter, it strengthened their convictions. While cooking, Hamsāduta would think about what Prabhupāda had said in his letter; Satsvarūpa would meditate on the letter while riding to work on the train and chanting on his beads; and the women, who sometimes quarreled—usually about why Jadurāṇī didn't keep her room clean—would improve the quality of their conversation by referring to Prabhupāda's recent letter.

After a couple of months in Boston, Satsvarūpa found a tiny storefront for rent. Even before he was able to get a key and see inside, he wrote Prabhupāda about the little storefront situated among student apartment buildings near Boston University.

When Satsvarūpa had gained entrance to the storefront for the first time, he had come alone and had checked out the bare front room, the basement, and the oil burner. Just as he was about to leave, however, he spotted a blue aerogram on the floor. Although it lay only a few feet from the door, he hadn't noticed it on entering. Picking the aerogram up, he saw that it was from Swamiji in Calcutta. It was as if Swamiji were there to greet him—a miracle!

As Satsvarūpa tore open the blue aerogram, he considered how it had traveled from hand to hand, originating with Swamiji in his room in Calcutta, and had flown to America, mixed in with thousands of other letters in a large mail bag, and had been separated and brought here to a building where no one lived. Yet the mailman had put it through the chute, and it had glided a few feet and landed on the floor, where it had sat for days. This was, of course, no more than the miracle of the postal service. But what the postman could not have possibly appreciated was that so much was being carried in that lightweight aerogram. Sitting on the window shelf, Satsvarūpa read Swamiji's words.

I can understand that you have secured a very nice place in Boston and there is very good possibility of pushing our movement amongst the student community there. Our movement is certainly very much appealing to the younger section of your country and if we are successful in the matter of attracting the students' community in your country, certainly this movement will scatter all over the world and the foretelling of Lord Caitanya that in every village and every town

of the world the Lord will be famous for His glorious sankirtana movement. Please try for this with your heart and soul and your life will be a successful mission.

Satsvarūpa took the letter as confirmation that they should take this building. But as there was little space and no hot water, and as Himāvatī was pregnant, Hamsadūta decided to move with his wife to the Montreal temple. At the same time, however, another disciple, Pradyumna, moved to Boston. So Satsvarūpa, Jadurāṇī, and Pradyumna moved into the little storefront.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote Satsvarūpa from India, asking him to try and get him an appointment as a lecturer at a university in Boston. Such an appointment, Prabhupāda reasoned, would enable him to easily obtain permanent residency in the U.S. Satsvarūpa went first to Harvard, where administrators and faculty members simply sent him from office to office. Although some of them seemed curious to hear about the learned swami, his books, and his mission, none seriously considered endorsing the swami as a member of the Harvard faculty. Satsvarūpa continued, however, walking from office to office, rapt in thought of Swamiji, praying to be a better and more effectual disciple. Keenly he felt the lack of appreciation of these educators for that person who was actually the most valuable teacher of all.

A famous Sanskrit professor, in his cubbyhole within the Widener Library, gave half an hour to hearing from Satsvarūpa about the swami and talking to him about the Vedas. But the professor was unable to sign a letter requesting that the swami come to America.

Finally, after several days at Harvard, Satsvarūpa managed to reserve a hall in a fraternity house for a single evening in November. The most difficult part was to persuade the house clerk to type a letter on the fraternity's letterhead acknowledging that Swami Bhaktivedanta would lecture at the hall for one night in November. Although it was only a tiny victory, Satsvarūpa was pleased nevertheless. He sent the "Harvard" letter to Swamiji, who gratefully acknowledged it but added that an appointment as lecturer would have been better.

November came, and Swamiji was still in India. So Satsvarūpa, Pradyumna, and Jadurāṇī attended the engagement themselves, handling lively debates with the students. The Harvard Crimson printed a picture of the devotees, describing them as prophets. Śrīla Prabhupāda said he liked that in his absence his disciples were acting as prophets of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One night about two weeks before Prabhupāda left India for San Francisco, Satsvarūpa dreamed that Swamiji had already come to Boston. When he wrote Prabhupāda about this, Prabhupāda replied,

You have described in your letter that my presence again before you will be wonderful. I quite agree that it will be wonderful to be with you. Your sincere prayer to Lord Nṛsimhadeva is helping me to recuperate my health, and you will be glad to know that I am arriving in San Francisco on 14 December... I can understand that you are all thinking for me twenty-four hours and therefore Satsvarupa had a dream that I had gone to Boston and was enjoying your company.

On December 14, 1967, Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in San Francisco. The next day a devotee there phoned the devotees in Boston and told them details of Swamiji's arrival. He said he might even be able to arrange for Swamiji to speak to them on the phone; at least he would try.

Then one night the phone rang in the Boston storefront... and it was Swamiji! Jadurāṇī, who answered, said she had heard that Swamiji had looked very healthy at the airport and that he had been walking quickly and was tanned from the sun. When Prabhupāda mentioned that he had traveled all the way from India by himself, Jadurāṇī corrected, "But Kṛṣṇa was with you." Satsvarūpa was next. "Swamiji," he began, "we miss you very much." And Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, and I am hearing you also." Then Pradyumna spoke to Prabhupāda, explaining how he was trying to advertise Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Afterwards, each devotee related to the others what Swamiji had said. Each admitted to having said at least one very foolish thing to Swamiji; but they agreed that everything Swamiji had said had been wonderful. Satsvarūpa's and Pradyumna's happiness became so great that they couldn't restrain themselves from rolling on the floor.

On the phone Prabhupāda had said that when he had left America he had had very little hope of returning. But Kṛṣṇa had informed him that he was not going to die immediately, so he had returned. He had said that he was getting inspiration in Kṛṣṇa consciousness from his own disciples, whom he considered to be "good souls."

Prabhupāda later wrote the Boston devotees from San Francisco.

Although officially I am your spiritual master, I consider all you students as my spiritual master because your love for Krishna and service for Krishna teach me how to become a sincere Krishna conscious person.

He told them that although they were only three devotees, they should each work for three hundred. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, Prabhupāda explained, is never tired of working. Prabhupāda saw this as a symptom of spiritual advancement in his disciples, many of whom never tired of devotional service and always wanted to be overloaded with more and more work.

To each of the three devotees in Boston Prabhupāda had given a specific engagement. Jadurāṇī's was painting. Prabhupāda had told her to increase the beauty of Back to Godhead magazine with illustrations. He had especially commissioned certain paintings: Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛn dāvana, Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Caitanya with His four principal associates, Lord Caitanya and His associates performing kīrtana, as well as paintings of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and Swamiji himself.

Since Jadurāṇī didn't have much art training, her first paintings had been crude, and Prabhupāda had sometimes laughed to see a picture's defects. But he had been pleased with Jadurāṇī, who chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa while she worked and executed each painting just according to his instructions. If she stayed absorbed in painting, Prabhupāda said, then wherever she lived would be as good as Vṛndāvana.

Prabhupāda wrote to Jadurāṇī, asking her to gather other female disciples interested in art, form an art department, and flood the world with paintings of Kṛṣṇa. The paintings, he said, were like windows on the spiritual world. He instructed her in many of the details of painting.

The airplanes in Vaikuṇṭha aren't exactly like the airplanes here, but it is something like the swan while flying, in shape, with a throne on the back, bedecked all over with golden filigree work, and looking very brilliant. It isn't a bird flying, but the shape of the plane is like the swan bird flying.

In depicting the fight between the boar incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the demon Hiranyākṣa, Prabhupāda gave specific instructions.

The demons could assume any gigantic shape they liked. They can play jugglery; they are not ordinary human beings. You must know that a person with whom God had to fight is not an ordinary person. He could play almost equally with the Lord, but nobody can excel the Lord...

Yes, Varaha is very beautiful. Generally, the boar picture is depicted as half-human, and half-boar, but in Bhāgavatam it is stated that full boar. You can make the first two legs as two hands, and the rear two legs as legs, and make it as beautiful as possible... Yes, He is reddish just like a boar.

Eager to improve her art, Jadurāṇī began studying the great masters. But when she painted Nārada Muni after the style of Raphael, Prabhupāda said that Nārada looked too sensuous. He said he preferred her first painting of Nārada, although it had not been much more than a stick figure, because she had carefully tried to follow a print he had given her. Seeing the new sensuous Nārada and hearing of Jadurāṇī's plans to study art and sell her paintings, Prabhupāda replied critically.

You are already a great artist. You don't want to become a great artist to satisfy the senses of the public. If your present paintings are not acceptable to the general public, I do not mind; they are fools. You continue trying your best to make your pictures as far as they can be nice looking, but not to satisfy the senses of the rascal public. Yesterday I was in a Unitarian church and there I saw two pictures of only logs and bamboo, and it was explained to me by our great artist Govinda dāśī that these are modern abstract art. Anyway I couldn't see in them anything but a combination of logs and bamboos. There is nothing to impel my Krishna consciousness. So, if you want to be a great artist in that way, I will pray that Krishna may save you. Anyway, if the public doesn't buy, we don't mind. Why you are anxious for selling? We shall distribute them to devotees without any price. If our things have no market in the sense gratification society that does not mean we are going to change our principles. We are meant for satisfying Krishna, not anybody's senses. That should be the principle of our life.

Jadurāṇī became despondent. Feeling like a fool and a deviant disciple, she wrote Prabhupāda only a brief reply. For several days she moped, considering her situation hopeless. Then she received another letter.

This is the first time I have received a letter from you finished in only three lines, so I can understand that you have been depressed by receiving my last letter. The idea is that there is a story, "That, I have lost my caste and still my belly is not fulfilled." In India, it is the custom that the Hindus do not ever take meals in the house of a Mohammedan, Christian, or anyone other than

the house of a Hindu brahmana. But a man was very hungry, and accidentally he took his food in the house of a Mohammedan. And when he wanted still more food, the man refused, as the Mohammedan could not supply. So the Hindu man said, "Sir, I have lost my caste, and still I am hungry(!)" Similarly, if artistic pictures as they are approved by the people in general in this country can be sold quickly, I have no objection to present our pictures in such a way. But I know that pictures in this country are sold not on the merit of the picture, but on the reputation of the artist. That system is also current in India. But to come to the point of a reputed artist will require a long duration of time. And our time is very short. We have to finish our Krishna consciousness during our lifetime, and we should not waste a single moment for anything else. According to Caitanya-caritamṛta, a man is famous who is known as a great devotee of Krishna. So if there is not possibility of selling our pictures immediately on presentation, I do not think there is any necessity to improve our artistic craftsmanship. We should be satisfied with our pictures hanging in our different temples. But we may not sacrifice our valuable time for becoming famous artists so that pictures may be sold like hotcakes... Of course, I am not an artist, neither I have power to see from artistic viewpoint; I am a layman, so whichever picture appeals to me I say it is nice, and whichever picture does not appeal to me I say it is not nice. That is my common sense affair. Therefore my remark has no value from artistic sense. Anyway, don't be depressed; you can go on with your work, and we shall talk more on this subject when we meet together.

Taking heart, Jadurāṇī continued to turn out more new paintings until there was scarcely room enough in the storefront to hang another.

Pradyumna's service was Sanskrit. Prabhupāda encouraged him to become expert so that one day he would be able to assist in the translation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Although to help support the temple Pradyumna had taken a clerical job with an insurance company, when he wasn't at his job, he would usually be in the basement studying Sanskrit. A natural scholar, he began accumulating books and talking to Sanskrit students and professors at Harvard, where a prominent professor allowed him to audit one of his Sanskrit courses. Prabhupāda gave Pradyumna as his first assignment in Sanskrit the rendering of English synonyms for the verses of Brahma-saṁhitā. He also assigned him specific books to study, and Pradyumna took to them with enthusiasm, even avoiding the chores Satsvarūpa asked him to do in the temple.

Prabhupāda was pleased with Pradyumna's work, and this inspired Pradyumna to work more and more. But when Pradyumna sent a list of books he wanted to read to Prabhupāda for his approval, Prabhupāda, although interested in Pradyumna's scholarship, warned him of the dangers.

Regarding the book list: Lord Gaurāṅga by S. K. Ghose and Veder Parichaya by Bon Maharaja are useless and you may not get them. The other books and the Gaudiya paper are acceptable... I am glad to know that you are working hard to expand the Krishna consciousness propaganda in Boston. I may say that this practical devotion is the secret to understanding the sastras. My Guru Maharaja used to say that for one who is not engaged in devotional service, reading all of the books is simply like licking the outside of the honey jar. One who thinks the book is the thing is content in this way. But we should learn the secret to open the jar and taste the honey. In this way, if we can simply understand one book, one sloka, the perfection is there. Lord Caitanya warned about reading too many books, although I see in America this is very popular to get volumes and volumes of books and not understand one. Anyway by sincerely working and by carefully executing the

instructions of the spiritual master you will be all successful by Krishna's grace. I am always praying to Krishna for your advancement in Krishna consciousness, all of you, sincere souls.

When Prabhupāda noticed spelling errors in the Sanskrit words in Back to Godhead magazine, he asked that Pradyumna standardize the Sanskrit transliterations. Pradyumna had the aptitude, and Prabhupāda hoped he would become a successful scholar.

Satsvarūpa's special assignment was typing and editing Prabhupāda's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam dictations. Prabhupāda had first given Satsvarūpa this assignment in New York in 1966, and Satsvarūpa had continued when Prabhupāda had gone to San Francisco early in 1967. Later that same year, when Prabhupāda fell ill and stopped dictating, there had been no more tapes for Satsvarūpa to type. But as soon as Prabhupāda had returned from India, he had again begun translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He had written Satsvarūpa in Boston, asking him to rent a dictating machine: "As soon as you let me know that you have one dictaphone there, I will send you the tapes regularly."

By the end of December the tapes had begun arriving at the Boston temple—plastic reels, Grundig dictation tapes, wrapped in a simple business envelope, stapled and addressed in Swamiji's own hand. First they had come at the rate of one a week, then more quickly—two or three a week. Satsvarūpa had set aside the early morning hours for typing, before going to work, even before the others had risen from bed. He would sit on the kitchen floor listening to Prabhupāda's voice through earphones and typing. "This is better than getting a letter," he would think. It was Swamiji himself teaching the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Satsvarūpa became so attached to his service that his whole existence began to revolve around it. He would feel a pang of love for every U.S. mailman he saw in the city, because it was the mailmen who delivered Swamiji's tapes.

Although Satsvarūpa considered himself expert in hearing Swamiji's voice, on one tape there was one word he couldn't understand. Prabhupāda was describing the demon Hiraṇyākṣa's birth from Diti, and to Satsvarūpa it sounded like "by the pores of the pregnancy of Diti, the whole universe went dark." How could Diti's pregnancy have pores? Prabhupāda wrote back that it was "force," not "pores." Prabhupāda wrote, "The best thing will be as soon as you typewrite the tapes send me one copy after editing. I will keep one copy with me, you keep one copy with you..."

Sometimes, while riding on the bus to work, Satsvarūpa would fall asleep and dream of hearing Swamiji's voice in his ears and himself rapidly typing. It was a very personal service. Prabhupāda had nine tapes, and he wanted to keep track of how many were with Satsvarūpa and how many were on their way back to him. "I have sent one tape this morning," Prabhupāda wrote. "Probably you are getting it tomorrow. So far I received your edited copy of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and it is nicely done."

* * *

Since the arrival of winter's snow and ice in Boston, not many people had been coming by the storefront in the evenings. And the devotees were content to stay indoors, working at their respective tasks. Each of them was satisfied that his engagement was perfect.

Prabhupāda had fixed the date of his arrival in Boston for May 1, and he asked Satsvarūpa to begin arranging lectures for him in Boston's many universities. When the devotees sent Prabhupāda a few photographs of the storefront interior, he wrote back, "It gives me a nice idea." Although the photos showed only a small empty room with an unfinished altar, Prabhupāda had not been looking with the eyes of an interior decorator. Rather, his "nice idea" was that his disciples in Boston were engaging in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the best of their ability. The important thing was that they were serving Kṛṣṇa. By adding Kṛṣṇa consciousness, anything material could become valuable.

When Pradyumna had to enter the hospital for a hernia operation, Satsvarūpa didn't know how they would pay for it. Pradyumna's parents had refused. Having no one else to turn to, Satsvarūpa wrote Prabhupāda, asking him if he could pay the bill. Just as a dependent child, fearful of the world, turns always to his protective parents, Satsvarūpa had faith that Swamiji knew everything and could decide everything. And besides, no one else cared about Pradyumna or how the Boston center for Kṛṣṇa consciousness would pay a five-hundred-dollar hospital bill. Satsvarūpa concluded that if Swamiji thought it wrong for him to ask for the money, then he would tell them that also.

Śrīla Prabhupāda considered the hospital bill a botheration. Why should he have to worry about every item of business in ten different centers around the world? Although he assured Satsvarūpa that if necessary he would send the money for Pradyumna's bill, he suggested that his disciples form a governing board to manage such problems. His growing institution had to be properly managed—and not entirely by him. He should be left to carry on the duties proper for the spiritual master, not that he should have to be simultaneously treasurer, chairman, troubleshooter, and counselor for each problem of each devotee in each center. And yet that was happening as he accepted more disciples. They were turning to him for everything: medical advice, marriage counseling, financial assistance, as well as transcendental knowledge. Prabhupāda said it gave him a headache.

After Pradyumna's successful surgery, Prabhupāda wrote, congratulating him.

I shall be glad to know how you are making progress, and I am anxious that you are still feeling pains. I am glad to know that proper care is being taken, and you are not going up any stairs. That is very nice.

As the time grew nearer for Prabhupāda's arrival, Satsvarūpa, Pradyumna, and Jadurāṇī arranged for his living accommodation. When they wrote to Prabhupāda in New York candidly telling him what they had and asking if it was good enough, he replied that he didn't mind walking the nine blocks from the storefront to the house as long as there were no hills. And he didn't mind how many devotees stayed with him at the apartment, but he must have a separate, silent place. As for college lecture engagements, he said whether they were big or small, he was always "prepared to serve." "Probably you are making fine arrangements," he wrote. "Many will come to the temple to hear me. So in that case I must come."

May 1, 1968

The first devotee to meet Prabhupāda in Boston was Jadurāṇī, walking forward at the airport with a flower garland for her spiritual master. As they rode in the taxi together back to the temple, Prabhupāda asked Jadurāṇī about her painting. She complained that in preparing for his visit she had had to sew material for the altar, put up curtains, and make posters and post them all over the city—because the men in the temple were working at their office jobs. Consequently, she hadn't been able to do her real service of painting. "Don't worry," Prabhupāda said, "I won't stay long."

The taxi stopped at Prabhupāda's house on Hester Street. It was a two-story building, the first floor being Prabhupāda's apartment. Up stairs were some Boston University students, who had agreed to play their music softly while the swami was visiting; their motorcycles were parked beside the house. Walking slowly up the wooden stairs and across the front porch, Prabhupāda entered his apartment. Prabhupāda found Satsvarūpa in the kitchen, standing over the stove, cooking. Satsvarūpa offered obeisances and immediately returned to his cooking, apologizing that he hadn't been able to meet Swamiji at the airport. He had three burners going at once, and he appeared both very happy and very nervous.

"What are you cooking?" Prabhupāda asked.

"Sweetrice, halavā, purīs, and a vegetable," Satsvarūpa replied, stirring the sweet rice and watching over the other preparations as he spoke. It was more like the Sunday feast than Swamiji's daily fare of rice, dāl, and capātīs. But these rich dishes were all Satsvarūpa knew how to cook.

Prabhupāda smiled. Looking around the kitchen, he saw against the window a poster: "The Spiritual Master of the Holy Name is Coming to Boston." It was a photo of Swamiji with a list of speaking engagements at various universities. As Prabhupāda read it his face brightened. "You have given me a full month's engagement!" he said. Then he walked leisurely out of the kitchen, leaving Satsvarūpa anxiously trying to hurry lunch without burning anything.

Prabhupāda entered his room and took a seat at the low desk, leaning his back against the pillow. "Why don't you take some rest now?" Jadurāṇī suggested.

"I rested on the plane," Prabhupāda replied.

"Well," Jadurāṇī persisted, "you could rest some more."

Prabhupāda turned his head slightly away from her and said softly, "I am not meant for resting all day and night."

Prabhupāda asked to see Satsvarūpa. Gaurasundara went to fetch him but returned saying that Satsvarūpa couldn't come; he was too busy cooking.

When Prabhupāda's lunch finally arrived, the devotees in his room excused themselves and left Prabhupāda alone. Most of the devotees—including several guests and visitors from New York—

having stayed up all night preparing Swamiji's apartment, fell asleep on the floor in various rooms throughout the apartment. Prabhupāda could hear their snoring, and after finishing his lunch he went out and looked from room to room without waking anyone. In the living room, he sat down on the couch, and soon the devotees awoke and joined him.

Prabhupāda began talking about Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. "Vṛndāvana," he said, "is the kingdom of Rādhārāṇī. In Vṛndāvana, if someone wanted to visit me"—he looked behind him down the long hallway toward the door at the rear of the apartment—"they would call 'Jaya Radhe!'" Prabhupāda called out loudly, as if he were a visitor at the back door. "And I would call back"—he looked again toward the rear door—"Jaya Radhe! Kṛṣṇa is very strict, and Rādhā is very nice. A woman, unless she is unnatural, is very soft-hearted and very kindhearted. And Rādhārāṇī is not unnatural."

Later Jadurāṇī apologized to Swamiji for foolishly complaining to him in the car. He had said to her, "Don't worry, I won't stay long," but actually she wanted him to stay permanently. She didn't want him to think that his presence was an inconvenience. She had complained because she was in anxiety about neglecting the service that Prabhupāda had directly given to her. Whenever Satsvarūpa gave her service to do other than painting, she would become confused about the priority. Prabhupāda heard her patiently, clearly understanding the heart of her inquiry. "The direct order of the spiritual master," he said, "is the most important thing to do, except in an emergency."

Prabhupāda's first college lecture engagement in Boston was at Northeastern University. It was noon, and the paved campus, in the center of downtown Boston, was busy with thousands of students. Prabhupāda, accompanied by a small band of his disciples, moved gravely through the crowds.

At the entranceway to one of the main buildings was a large bronze statue of a dog, a husky, Northeastern's mascot. Prabhupāda became amused. Some of the older disciples knew that Swamiji was sarcastically humorous about Americans' attachment to their dogs. Because now people have no interest in God, he would say, therefore they have become devoted to dog. Instead of worshipping G-O-D, materialistic people had become enamored with D-O-G and considered him man's best friend. Some of Prabhupāda's disciples had told him strange stories of how Americans pampered their dogs so much that dogs sometimes sit at the dinner table with their masters or receive their master's property through the master's will. Pausing silently, regarding the almost deified form of the dog, Prabhupāda scored an unspoken criticism of Western values.

About two hundred students and a few teachers crowded into the pews of the small chapel. While Prabhupāda sat cross-legged on a cloth-covered table, Satsvarūpa led the kīrtana, playing on a one-headed drum.

After the kīrtana, Prabhupāda leaned forward to the microphone: "Thank you for giving me this opportunity to glorify the Supreme Personality of Godhead." And he began to lecture about the three aspects of the Absolute Truth, which he compared to the three aspects of the sun: the sunshine, the sun globe, and the sun-god. Although the Absolute Truth is one, some persons see Him as impersonal, all-pervading light; some see Him as the localized Supersoul in the heart of all beings; and some see Him as Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prabhupāda's talk was very philosophical.

Digressing, Prabhupāda began talking more about the sun. He said that on the sun there was a presiding deity, Vivasvān. "You can't disbelieve it," Prabhupāda said. And he quoted the Mahābhārata that on the sun are living entities with bodies of fire. Just as certain living entities have bodies adapted to living in water, so there are living entities that live in fire.

The big noonday crowd listened politely. Prabhupāda concluded his half-hour lecture by explaining God, the Supreme Being, as the origin of the material (external) and spiritual (internal) energies. We living entities, although spiritual, have marginal position; all of us in this material world are covered by the external energy. The prayer of "Hare Kṛṣṇa" means, "O my dear Lord, I am Your part and parcel eternally, but some way or other I have fallen in this ignorance of material energy. Kindly lift me up to the spiritual energy."

Although Prabhupāda invited the audience to stay afterward and speak with his disciples, when the bell rang, the lecture abruptly ended, and most of the students immediately left the chapel to make room for the next group of students. It was the academic factory; class was over, and Swamiji and his followers should now leave.

As Prabhupāda was walking down the hall, the wife of one of the college administrators joined him, walking at his side and chatting pleasantly and effusively, assuring him that everyone at the university was very glad he had come. She walked with him to the door and then shook his hand. Turning to Satsvarūpa, she exclaimed that everything had gone beautifully, that Swamiji had spoken wonderfully, and that she would send the hundred-dollar honorarium in the mail. Feeling excited and successful, the devotees accompanied Prabhupāda to the car. Riding back to his house, Prabhupāda agreed it had been a successful engagement.

The Boston University engagement in spacious Marsh Chapel was poorly attended. Despite thousands of students riding the trolleys and going in and out of the luncheonettes and big gray buildings that lined both sides of Commonwealth Avenue for blocks, only half a dozen came to Marsh Chapel to hear Swamiji. The devotees, pained and embarrassed, criticized Satsvarūpa for the turnout. Even the onstage arrangements were poor, with Prabhupāda seated on a too-high, rickety table.

Yet without hesitation, Prabhupāda held a full program, beginning with a kīrtana that lasted almost an hour. He requested Brahmānanda, visiting from New York, to give an introductory speech. Then Prabhupāda spoke, his voice reverberating over the sound system throughout the cavernous empty chapel.

After the lecture, Prabhupāda called for questions. A boy, standing at his seat and shouting to make himself heard, asked, "Is this advaita philosophy?" A challenge. The devotees could tell that this student had come with his own ideas about yoga and "advaita."

"Do you know what is advaita philosophy?" Prabhupāda asked.

"All is One," the boy replied. "Just as the rivers enter into the ocean, so we all enter into the Ultimate Oneness."

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that although the river goes to the ocean, its place in the ocean is not permanent. Again that water evaporates into the sky, forms clouds, and falls back onto the land. To argue that spiritually everything becomes one as the rivers go to the ocean, then the boy would have to accept the actual conclusion: the water again falls back onto the land. Similarly, those spirit souls who try to merge into the Absolute must again fall back into the material world. Prabhupāda thoroughly defeated the impersonal notion of oneness. The boy sat down silent. There were no other questions.

Talking with his disciples afterwards, Prabhupāda said sarcastically, "People today do not even know how to ask a good question. These impersonalists always ask the same hackneyed question about the river going into the ocean."

On the way back to the temple, some of the devotees continued to grumble about Swamiji's having to go to an engagement with such a poor turnout. Brahmānanda warned Satsvarūpa that the next engagement had better not be like this one.

Prabhupāda was well aware of the worldwide prestige of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge. Many Indians went there to study. It was, in fact, an Indian organization that invited Prabhupāda to speak. When Prabhupāda arrived in the evening, he found over a hundred people waiting in the carpeted, luxurious student lounge where he was to lecture. Some students were sitting on the floor, while others sat on the leather-upholstered couches and chairs scattered casually throughout the room.

Although it was time for the lecture to begin, the devotees had still not arrived with the paraphernalia. There was no flower garland for Prabhupāda, no painting of Kṛṣṇa, and no sign with the mahā-mantra. The audience waited.

In anxiety, Satsvarūpa asked Prabhupāda, "Can you begin without the painting?" Looking at the large, momentous gathering, Śrīla Prabhupāda said simply, "Painting is not important." He sat on the plain wooden platform and, since the musical instruments had not arrived, asked one of the devotees to play the Hare Kṛṣṇa album. Prabhupāda sat clapping his hands in time and listening.

Prabhupāda spoke boldly, challenging the very concepts underlying MIT. Where in this big university, he asked, is a department for studying the technology of the soul, for understanding that principle which distinguishes a living body from a dead body, that principle which when present in the body gives life and when absent brings death? Where is the science to study this all-important principle of life? Although scientists consider life to be merely chemicals or electric impulses, he argued, still they are unable to assemble the chemicals and produce life. Why? There is no department in this university for answering this question, and therefore people are in ignorance. They don't know the self or the next life or the purpose of human life beyond animal activities. This science, however, is taught in the Bhagavad-gītā.

After the lecture there were many questions. "What is the symbolism," one student asked, "of that object behind you on the stage?" Prabhupāda turned and beheld a bare U-shaped metal stand—compliments of the janitor—for holding the painting of Kṛṣṇa that never arrived.

"This?" Prabhupāda frowned. "I do not know what this is. This is some kind of technological symbol."

Another student asked, "Why do you wear that marking on your forehead?"

"Why do you wear that necktie around your neck?" Prabhupāda snapped back, annoyed with the question. The student sat down, looking at his necktie, and Prabhupāda explained to him that questions about why people dress a certain way are trivial, especially considering the gravity of the present subject matter.

When the question-and-answer period ended, Satsvarūpa stood and briefly addressed the students, inviting them to attend other college lectures by Śrīla Prabhupāda or to come hear him at the temple. "Wherever a saintly person goes," Satsvarūpa said, "becomes a tīrtha, or holy place. And now for the month of May, Boston is a tīrtha, so please take advantage of it."

As Śrīla Prabhupāda was leaving with his disciples, a group of Indian faculty members and students came and stood around him, speaking rapidly, challenging him. One student, espousing the philosophy of monism, asserted that the highest expression of the Absolute Truth was that "All is One." Prabhupāda tried to make him understand that simply oneness was a rudimentary idea, because from that "one" come so many variegated manifestations. But the man would not accept defeat, and Prabhupāda became excited arguing with him. Taking the man by the shirt collar, Prabhupāda shouted, "You say everything is one! But is this cotton shirt the same as a cotton ball? Why don't you wear a cotton ball instead of this shirt?"

The Indian technologists surrounded Prabhupāda, raising their voices and arguing, while Prabhupāda's disciples looked on anxiously. Govinda dāsī warned the devotees about Swamiji's health, and Brahmānanda and the others smoldered at the offensive Indians. This wasn't the way to speak with a sādhu.

Meanwhile, a devotee reported that Prabhupāda's car had broken down, and someone ran out into the street to get a taxi. The arguing continued. When a taxi finally arrived, a few disciples pushed through the arguers, insisting, "Swamiji, please, your taxi is waiting. It can't wait any longer. You have to go." And they disengaged their spiritual master from the mass of arguing technologists. Prabhupāda considered the evening a success.

Some of the devotees who had seen the poor attendance at Prabhupāda's Boston University lecture feared the same thing might happen at the Harvard School of Divinity. So they suggested Swamiji wait at his apartment while they went ahead to the lecture hall to see how many people would gather. When they saw a decent number gathering, one of them phoned Satsvarūpa that Swamiji should come. Meanwhile at the lecture hall, Joseph Matthews, a graduate student in Vaiṣṇavism, addressed the audience, describing from the mundane academic viewpoint the history of the Caitanya movement.

Prabhupāda, arriving half an hour later than scheduled, led the audience in kīrtana and began his talk. He praised the Harvard students as fortunate, citing that according to Vedic literature,

aristocratic birth, good education, beauty, and wealth are the four chief material opulences. Compared to others in the world, he said, the students at Harvard had all these opulences. If, however, they could increase their good fortune by adding Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then that would be their perfection. For example, gold is certainly very valuable. But if gold were to have a pleasant fragrance, then it would be even more valuable. Similarly, if these materially fortunate persons could add the spiritual fortune of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to their life, then that life would be successful.

After Prabhupāda's talk, Mr. Matthews thanked him for his discourse on Hindu philosophy. But immediately Prabhupāda interrupted: "Actually, we are not Hindu." And Prabhupāda explained the universality of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

As the meeting broke, some interested students came forward for more discussion with Swamiji. One Sanskrit student asked, "How can a brahmacārī be expected to understand the Gītā-govinda, since it deals in so many intricacies of man-woman relationships and love affairs?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Only a brahmacārī can understand Gītā-govinda, because it is not about mundane sexuality. It is the highest spiritual technology of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda was especially pleased about his Harvard lecture. The next morning Satsvarūpa went to see him with a check for \$125 from Harvard. "That was a very good meeting last night," Prabhupāda said.

It seemed to the devotees accompanying Prabhupāda from one speaking engagement to another that they were the real audience, the ones to whom Prabhupāda was speaking. It was for them that he had come to Boston, more than for the two hundred students who sat in the chapel at Northeastern until the bell rang, or the technologists in the lounge at MIT who left after the lecture for the movies and the bars. Prabhupāda was setting the example of how to preach. It was for them—the ones who would have to carry on the mission in his absence.

* * *

From morning until night, Prabhupāda spoke about Kṛṣṇa. Although yogīs sometimes take a vow of silence to avoid useless, frivolous talk, he said, one who knows Kṛṣṇa wants to speak twenty-four hours a day. "When you love God, you want to tell others about Him. And automatically you write volumes and volumes of books."

Of course, many times in the day Prabhupāda was actually silent, alone in his room. But that "silence" was also Kṛṣṇa conscious. Sometimes Govinda dāsī would peek in and find him reading the Sanskrit Bhāgavatam commentaries, chanting on his beads, or dozing briefly at his desk after lunch. Sometimes he would sing verses from Caitanya-caritāmṛta or walk around the apartment with his hand in his bead bag, chanting to himself and observing his assistants.

Govinda dāsī: In Boston Swamiji would sing for hours from Caitanya-caritāmṛta or Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—just singing with the most feeling all by himself in his room. And I would peek in the keyhole to see how he was. Sometimes I would go in and check on him when he would pause. I

would try not to disturb him—"Just checking." I would just go in to see if he needed anything. Sometimes I would peek in and simply think, "Who is he? Nobody knows who he really is or where he really came from or how great he really is." Especially in Boston I began to feel very strongly that he was such a great personality and that I was viewing only a very, very minute glimpse of him, and that actually much, much more was going on than I could realize.

A devotee might go in to ask Swamiji what he wanted for lunch or to check on his travel schedule or to get advice on some business item, but the talk would almost invariably turn to Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy once matters at hand had been dealt with. What Swamiji wanted for lunch might bring him to talk about what Kṛṣṇa liked for lunch, or how great devotees went without eating, or how the modern-day civilization was demoniac for killing helpless cows. And whoever entered Prabhupāda's room might find himself being pressed to argue against the existence of God and then be defeated by Prabhupāda. Or Prabhupāda might start talking—even to a disciple who came to replace a burned-out bulb—about how he wanted to one day introduce the Kṛṣṇa conscious social order, varṇāśrama-dharma, all over the world.

Sometimes a lone devotee sitting with Prabhupāda as he spoke so profoundly would feel guilty: "If instead of talking just to me he were translating his books, then everyone could benefit. I shouldn't be taking up his time in this way." Once Jadurāṇī expressed the sentiment, "Swamiji, maybe you should save your strength for translating."

"If you love someone," Prabhupāda replied, raising his head back while looking at Jadurāṇī, "you like to hear him speak."

More often, however, once a devotee got into Prabhupāda's room he wouldn't leave until Govinda dāśī came in, dropping broad hints or pointing to her watch and signalling from the doorway. In fact, the devotees took up so much of Prabhupāda's time that Gaurasundara and Govinda dāśī complained to Satsvarūpa. Swamiji was being disturbed more in Boston than he had been in any other place, they said, and he was getting very little translating done. Alarmed that Boston was becoming inconvenient for Swamiji, Satsvarūpa agreed to restrict devotees from seeing Prabhupāda in his room. He informed the devotees that they could accompany Prabhupāda on his walk, but that they should not follow him back to his house.

Satsvarūpa: Following my instruction the next morning everyone stopped at the bottom of the porch; Swamiji alone walked up the steps to his house. When he got to the top step, he turned around to see us all standing there, and he waved to us, "Come on." Everyone immediately ran up the stairs and joined him in his room.

Feeling guilty that we were taking up his time, I made an attempt to terminate the discussion in his room. Bowing my head to the floor in a gesture of leaving, I announced to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "We will leave you now and let you do your work." But Swamiji checked me as presumptuous. "You think I am not working now? Do you think this is not work?" He said, "You do not know what work is. This is also work." And he talked on.

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke to eradicate the ignorance of whoever would hear him—whether a crowd of thousands or a single disciple in his room. Although he was especially interested in addressing the

younger generation—the older was too biased—the number of listeners wasn't important. After the first meeting in the temple, when the attendance had dropped, Prabhupāda had said that it didn't mean he should stop speaking. He gave the example of a university in Calcutta that had kept classes open although only two students had enrolled in one course and only one student in another. And this, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, should certainly be the standard with transcendental education; if only one person learned it, he could do good to many others.

Early one morning as Śrīla Prabhupāda walked through the neighborhood of Allston with Satsvarūpa and Gaurasundara, Satsvarūpa mentioned that a famous swami had recently given a talk at Arlington Street Church, where Prabhupāda was also scheduled to speak. "What does he say?" Prabhupāda asked. Satsvarūpa said that he had heard that the swami had said he was God. Immediately Prabhupāda began to argue, destroying the swami's alleged claim to be God.

"They say they are God and the dog is God," Prabhupāda began. As he spoke, Satsvarūpa and Gaurasundara walked beside him, sometimes holding back a low tree branch or watching on Prabhupāda's behalf for traffic at the street crossings. But mostly they were concentrating on Prabhupāda's words. Satsvarūpa could understand that Swamiji was expending energy just to instruct him, to equip him to defeat such arguments. He tried to remember every word exactly as Swamiji was speaking it.

"If everyone is God," Prabhupāda continued, "then why is God worshiped all over the world in temples and churches, and why are these 'Gods' shoe-kicking each other? Do they know what God is that they say they are God? Do they have an idea of what God is? God is the controller. Are they controlling the universe? Ask them these questions. Are they omnipotent and omniscient? These are qualities of God. If you are God, do you know what I am thinking?—because God is all-knowing. They should not be allowed to say these things. They should be curbed with these questions."

Prabhupāda punctuated his talk by sudden stops. He was angry. It was as if he were charging his disciples for allowing this nonsense "I am God" talk to go on unchecked. Why didn't they stop these rascals? He looked at them with eyes flashing. Were they meeting the challenges of the atheists? They should be. They should be fighting. And these were the arguments they should use. They shouldn't doubt.

"We understand God is vast," Prabhupāda continued. "We are similar to Him in quality, but we are infinitesimal. If they are God, then how is it they have come to this doggish state? You may be God, but for the present moment they are not God. They will admit that for the present moment they are not God, but that they will become God in the future. But what kind of God is this? And how have they fallen under illusion? That means illusion is stronger than God—that they have come under illusion. So the God then is *māyā*, or not God. They may be God, but they are not the param brahman, the supreme God. We have the definition of God—that He is all-powerful. This swami is not all-powerful. If some poor fellow came to him on the street, he could not stop from getting a beating. And if he got a toothache, he would be ruined as God. God is all-wealthy. This swami is begging for money, and he is God? God is all-knowing. They are not even intelligent. To surrender to Kṛṣṇa is intelligent. They are kicking each other, and they are fallen in the conditioned state. And they say they are God! These questions should be put to them. They cannot answer them."

Prabhupāda continued his walk through a neighborhood of automobile showrooms, hamburger luncheonettes not yet opened, and bus stops crowded with workers who stared at the elderly Swami passing with his young followers.

"The devotees," Prabhupāda said, "are more interested in talking about Kṛṣṇa and in chanting His name than in arguing. But because so many godless parties come forward and challenge, a Vaiṣṇava must be able to argue on the basis of śāstra and sound logic."

* * *

Mr. Matthews, the Harvard graduate student of Vaiṣṇavism, visited Prabhupāda at his apartment one evening. Prabhupāda explained that if one is inquisitive not about temporary things but about the Absolute, then he must go to a guru. Mr. Matthews asked whether sannyāsa was necessary.

According to Bhagavad-gītā, Prabhupāda replied, a sannyāsī is one who has given everything to the service of Kṛṣṇa. The dress and social standing are not important. While Mr. Matthews posed intricate questions about the contemporary situation of spiritual masters in India, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that a true spiritual master must be in disciplic succession and must strictly follow the regulative principles of Vaiṣṇava behavior. The current family custom in India of having a family guru was foolishness. The guru was not a family commodity or a pet.

Mr. Matthews was trying to make the point that Prabhupāda was not the only spiritual master and that there were many pure devotees in places like Vṛndāvana who did not necessarily go out for preaching but who preached to whoever came to them.

"Lord Caitanya," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "ordered to go out and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Not that I stay in Vṛndāvana, and if anyone comes to me, I will teach. We must go out and go to them. Caitanya Mahāprabhu ordered like that. He is the authority. We don't serve this or that. We serve Kṛṣṇa and nothing else: 'I am a servant of Kṛṣṇa.' And the best position for preaching is sannyāsa, because he doesn't have to send money to his family or go back to his wife at a certain hour. But everything is for Kṛṣṇa. This is the attractive background for preaching. The dress is not important."

Mr. Matthews disagreed that a spiritual master had to be a sannyāsī or a renounced preacher. After about an hour, Mr. Matthews checked his watch and became alarmed: "Oh, my goodness. It's late. I am having guests over, and my wife is cooking a dinner for them. I have to go."

"You see?" Prabhupāda said. "This proves my point."

* * *

Late in May, Prabhupāda held a public lecture at the Arlington Street Church, a well-known landmark in the heart of downtown Boston. With many respectable-looking older people as well as young people in the audience, the meeting was well attended. Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke on yoga as

Lord Kṛṣṇa explains it in Bhagavad-gītā. Prabhupāda emphasized that Kṛṣṇa chose Arjuna as the recipient of the knowledge of yoga.

Why Arjuna? Arjuna, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, wasn't a sannyāsī, he was a family man. He wasn't a scholar. And so many big scholars were present at the time. He wasn't a haṭha-yogī or even a brāhmaṇa. So why was he picked? Prabhupāda shouted into the microphone: "Bhakto 'si me!... Bhakto 'si me sakhā ceti. Because you are My devotee!"

Afterward, Prabhupāda asked for questions.

"There are different levels of yoga," someone asked, "so you can take any yoga and then go further up?"

"Step by step you can go up—that is your option. But bhakti-yoga is to take the life immediately. 'One who is thinking always of Me within his heart and is engaged in My service with faith and devotion—he is a first-class yogī of all yogīs.' Yoga means to contact the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If by some process you can at once contact, that is first class. Why not try it? Try chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Try this process."

"Does devotion come first and then awareness, or awareness first?"

Prabhupāda: "First devotion, then awareness. If you do not labor for passing exam, how you can pass? The primary rule is to chant. Just see. We have a little faith in the beginning, a little respect. We think, 'Let me see what is this Kṛṣṇa consciousness.' If we think it is nice, then we come again and associate. These boys did not accept in the beginning, but they came and advanced. For others, it is hackneyed. But these boys have become purified and they have a taste. They cannot give it up. It is ecstasy. So there is gradual process of love of God."

The next morning three disciples of Swami Satchidananda visited Śrīla Prabhupāda. Accompanying him on his morning walk, they asked many questions.

They were young men like Prabhupāda's disciples. One of them was a hairdresser named Bob. If they are already disciples of a guru, Satsvarūpa thought, then why are they so curious about another guru's process?

Bob asked, "Don't you need to practice haṭha-yoga in order to purify the body so that eventually you can purify the higher self within?"

"Cleanse the mind and the intelligence," Prabhupāda replied, "and the body is automatically cleansed. Haṭha-yoga is for those in the gross bodily concept of life. In the second chapter of Bhagavad-gītā, Kṛṣṇa says that a wise man doesn't place much importance on the body. The haṭha-yogī's main concentration is this body. By bodily exercise he wants to have Kṛṣṇa's love. If this were possible, all wrestlers and athletes would have achieved Kṛṣṇa's love. Lord Caitanya's program of chanting begins with the cleansing of the mind, and this takes care of cleansing the body."

Yoga student: "What about sex desire? I want the spiritual, but I have such a strong desire for sex."

Prabhupāda: "Haṭha-yoga is also for controlling sex desire. If you have such desire, you are making no progress."

Yoga student: "How does a devotee of Kṛṣṇa control sex desire?"

Prabhupāda: "Automatically. Kṛṣṇa is so beautiful. We are accustomed to this habit for a very long time. Become sincere, and Kṛṣṇa will protect you."

Yoga student: "Sometimes I have a sex urge..."

Prabhupāda: "What? You? Everybody! In birds, beasts, demigods—the binding force is sex. The material life means sex desire. Free from sex desire means advancing in spiritual desire. If you have a strong sex desire, pray to Kṛṣṇa. Know that this is the attack of māyā. Pray, and māyā will go away. You cannot fight with māyā with your own energy. Māyā is presenting herself more beautiful than Kṛṣṇa. But Kṛṣṇa is more beautiful."

Yoga student: "How soon before I could get initiated by you?"

Prabhupāda: "The first initiation is to understand the philosophy. Actually, one should be initiated after hearing for one year."

Yoga student: "How can you tell a Kṛṣṇa conscious holy man from an ordinary holy man?"

Prabhupāda: "He is always thinking about Kṛṣṇa. Not even a moment without thinking about Kṛṣṇa."

Yoga student: "Can māyā have a hold on a man who's dedicated to selflessness, even if he doesn't take to Kṛṣṇa?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, māyā is always holding you. Unless you surrender to Kṛṣṇa, some way māyā has you. God says, 'Here I am.' But you say God is somewhere else. You are searching after God, and you cannot see when He comes before you. Then you are in māyā. Why don't you accept Kṛṣṇa as God?"

Yoga student: "What is the nature of a devotee? Is he always in ecstasy?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, always in ecstasy. He's always feeling separation: 'I could not serve Kṛṣṇa.' This is nice."

Yoga student: "Does it actually say anywhere in the scriptures that you have to come back to the material world if you don't worship Kṛṣṇa? Does it actually say it?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, yes: āruhya kṛcchreṇa paraṁ padaṁ tataḥ patanty adho 'nādr̥ta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ. 'By neglecting Your lotus feet he has to come down again.' 'Feet' means He is a person."

These yoga students were attracted to Prabhupāda's teachings. They began to act like his followers, attending his kīrtanas and lectures, offering obeisances to him.

One day after a morning walk, Prabhupāda, accompanied by some of his disciples and the yoga students, returned to his room. When Prabhupāda noticed that his secretary, Gaurasundara, was absent, he called for him. Gaurasundara came to the door, and Prabhupāda asked why he was not attending the talk. He was busy working in another room, Gaurasundara explained. "Do you think that these talks I give are just for new men?" Prabhupāda asked angrily. "You don't have to hear? Do you think that you are so advanced? This is not good. You should always hear when your spiritual master speaks."

After several days, the haṭha-yoga students stopped coming. "They appeared so devoted," Prabhupāda remarked casually. "That one boy was even helping me with my shoes."

Prabhupāda continued attending the storefront three nights a week. Wearing his swami cap, with its hanging straps, he looked like a rugged aviator. Entering the room, he would look around to see who was there, walk forward to the altar, offer his obeisances to the picture of Kṛṣṇa, and ascend to the raised platform to speak.

One night, while Prabhupāda was down on his hands and knees before the altar, just about to rise up after offering obeisances, he began to carefully scrutinize a picture one of the devotees had recently placed on the altar. The picture showed a young woman handing baby Kṛṣṇa to His father Vasudeva; both Vasudeva and the young woman were standing in a river. The devotees didn't know the meaning of the picture or who the woman was, so one of them asked Prabhupāda about it.

While Prabhupāda and half a dozen devotees remained on the floor on their hands and knees, Prabhupāda told them the story. Kṛṣṇa's father Vasudeva had been carrying Him across the Yamunā when Kṛṣṇa had fallen in. In great anxiety, Vasudeva had searched within the water for his son. The Yamunā River personified (the young woman in the picture) had then risen out of the water and handed Kṛṣṇa to Vasudeva, saying, "I just wanted to play with Him for a while."

One night after his lecture, while Prabhupāda sat conversing with disciples, Govinda dāsī handed him an advertisement Rāya Rāma had designed for Back to Godhead magazine. The ad featured several pictures of Prabhupāda and the headline "This Man Has Changed the History of the World." The devotees were proud of the ad, which was supposed to be in accordance with the latest graphic and advertising trends. Prabhupāda, however, held the ad in his hand silently. Finally, someone asked him what he thought of it, and Prabhupāda replied, "This is not good. It is not considered respectful to call the spiritual master by the term 'man.' " This shows the state of consciousness of the disciple, he explained. Frowning, he handed back the ad.

Several times one evening, children screaming and rapping on the window panes interrupted Prabhupāda's lecture. After several interruptions, Prabhupāda shook his head and said that these children had no training, which was the fault of modern society. A man in the audience objected: "But children are known as the divine folk."

"What is that?" Prabhupāda asked.

"These children are supposed to be divine."

Prabhupāda looked at the man. "Supposed to be," he said dryly. "That's all right."

One evening after the lecture, Prabhupāda toured the small storefront. One of the main features he noted was the abundance of paintings by Jadurāṇī, and he looked at each one with pleasure.

When he went downstairs to the basement and saw the devotees' austere living and bathing conditions, for which some people had criticized them, he was not disturbed. He inspected the oil burner and asked if it worked all right. There was little for Satsvarūpa to show him in the tiny building, so Prabhupāda saw everything in only a few minutes. Yet because it was Kṛṣṇa's center and they were Kṛṣṇa's devotees, Prabhupāda's brief tour made everything seem important and worthwhile.

* * *

It came as a surprise to everyone when one day Prabhupāda said that he would be giving some of his disciples brāhmaṇa, or second, initiation; he would award the Gāyatrī mantra and sacred thread to those men who had been initiated for at least one year. The devotees wanted to know more about the initiation, and Prabhupāda said he would explain everything at the ceremony. The ceremony, he said, would be in the temple, and there should be a sacrificial fire just as at any other initiation. He invited Mr. Matthews from Harvard as the guest of honor.

One the day of the initiation, everyone crowded into the temple room around the mound of earth where the sacred fire would soon be blazing. The half a dozen male disciples whom Śrīla Prabhupāda had selected to receive brahminical initiation took their seats.

Prabhupāda entered. Taking his seat on the pillow on the floor directly before the mound of earth, he began to explain how his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, had introduced brahminical initiation for disciples not born of brāhmaṇa families. He said the Vedic scriptures offered much evidence that by associating with pure devotees, anyone could become a brāhmaṇa. In fact, the scriptures said that if one born in a brāhmaṇa family did not behave as a brāhmaṇa, then he should not be accepted as a brāhmaṇa. So it was in following his spiritual master and the Vedic scriptures that Śrīla Prabhupāda was now going to give brahminical initiation to his disciples.

Addressing Mr. Matthews as "Professor Matthews," Prabhupāda asked whether he had any questions about the procedure. Mr. Matthews laughed and said he was not a professor yet. He asked whether the Gāyatrī mantra was more important than the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Prabhupāda replied that the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra was sufficient in itself for delivering the disciple back to Godhead; nevertheless, the Gāyatrī mantra would increase the Kṛṣṇa consciousness of the disciple.

Mr. Matthews: "Do these disciples take on any new vows, such as fasting?"

Prabhupāda: "No, there is no new vow. As far as fasting is concerned, people take to fasting because generally they eat all nonsense all week. So for one day they stop eating in order to purify themselves. But the devotees are always eating Kṛṣṇa prasādam, which is sanctified. So even by eating, they are fasting."

Later in the ceremony, the boys went, one by one, and sat beside Śrīla Prabhupāda, who placed a sacred white thread over their bare shoulders and chest and showed them how to count the mantras on their fingers.

While the sacrificial fire was blazing and the devotees were chanting mantras and throwing grains in the flames, the landlord's wife suddenly intruded. She was middle-aged, intoxicated, disheveled—a grotesque alcoholic tottering in the doorway. Striding into the room, she shouted, "God damn this house!" and then turned and left, slamming the door. Prabhupāda looked up innocently. "What did she say? Did she say that this is the house of God?"

"She's just drunk," Satsvarūpa said.

Govinda dāsī hadn't gone to the initiation, excusing herself as ill. Although she hadn't told Prabhupāda, she was upset that he wasn't giving brahminical initiation to women. Disappointed, she had stayed at Swamiji's apartment, crying. After an hour, however, she decided that by behaving so foolishly she was missing out on Prabhupāda's talk. So she hurried out of the house and ran all the way to the temple, arriving near the end of the ceremony. As she entered, Prabhupāda looked up. "Oh," he said, "I was just thinking, 'Where is that girl?' and Kṛṣṇa has sent."

After the ceremony Govinda dāsī conferred with Jadurāṇī, who also felt slighted. Prabhupāda could detect their mentality, although they didn't openly voice their complaints. The next morning he told Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī that he saw no harm in offering the Gayātrī mantra to women—but they could not receive the sacred thread. That very night, he held a separate ceremony, initiating Govinda dāsī and Jadurāṇī into the Gayātrī mantra.

A few days later a group of devotees came from New York and Prabhupāda initiated more brāhmaṇas. One morning, when he saw a group of new brāhmaṇa initiates coming to join him on his walk, he said, "Oh, here come the brāhmaṇas. But now don't be brāhmaṇas in name only."

* * *

The bus was painted green, had a cracked windshield, no seats, and a dubious engine. It was unregistered and uninsured. Haṁsadūta, who had received the bus as a donation, planned to use it for the world-touring saṅkīrtana party Prabhupāda had asked him to form. Before Śrīla Prabhupāda and a gathering of devotees in Prabhupāda's room, Haṁsadūta talked enthusiastically about the newly donated bus. Prabhupāda asked to go for a ride.

Rohiṇī-kumāra: This bus was so horrible. It was in terrible condition and rattling so much. It was on the verge of breaking down at any minute. The only seat on the bus was the driver's seat, so someone got a chair from the house for Swamiji to sit on. He sat in front like the captain of a ship.

He was completely transcendental to the whole horrible situation. And I felt very bad. I thought, "Oh, Swamiji shouldn't have to ride in such a horrible bus."

What began as a group of devotees taking their spiritual master on a short ride suddenly changed when, after going a block, Prabhupāda began giving the driver directions: "Go to the right, turn left, turn here, now go here." With the bus's engine coughing sporadically, the ride remained rough and rickety, despite several men pooling their weight against the legs of the chair. But by following Prabhupāda's directions, they soon arrived at the waterfront. Prabhupāda said he wanted to go to Commonwealth Pier, the first place he had come in America when, in September of 1965, he had arrived from India aboard the *Jaladuta*. The boys marvelled as Prabhupāda continued to direct them to Commonwealth Pier.

"I first came here," Prabhupāda said, as he walked along the pier with his disciples. "I thought, 'I don't know why I have come here. The language is different, the idea is different. They are all after sense gratification. I don't know why I've come here.' But now I have got some boys, and even if I am not here, it will go on."

As the devotees walked beside Prabhupāda, trying to hear him speak, they could see the city skyline nearby. One large building was being torn down, and new ones were going up. "So many strong buildings," Prabhupāda said, "being torn down and then rebuilt. There is no pleasure in it, neither in building nor in tearing down. Nobody is happy. It is like with a small child. He is happy to get a toy, and then he is happy to break it. But there is no real happiness. Just like the boy and girl—they come together in union, and then they separate, divorce. There is no real happiness in the union or in the separation. Real happiness is in union with Kṛṣṇa and separation from māyā. But it is māyā that again and again causes this union and separation in the material world."

As they walked together under a steel bridge, Prabhupāda pointed upward with his walking cane, "Look"—a sign under the bridge read UNALLOYED STEEL—"they have unalloyed steel, and we have un alloyed devotional service."

"What if people don't want to hear our message?" Pradyumna asked.

"The people might not understand our message, but Kṛṣṇa will be pleased," Prabhupāda replied. "And that is our mission. They thought Jesus Christ's mission was stopped. They killed him. But his mission was attained. He preached three years only, but so many followers. He pleased Kṛṣṇa. We must not be disappointed that no one is hearing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We will say it to the moon and stars and all directions. We will cry in the wilderness, because Kṛṣṇa is everywhere. We want to get a certificate from Kṛṣṇa that, 'This man has done something for Me.' Not popularity. If a pack of asses says you are good, what is that? We have to please Kṛṣṇa's senses with purified senses."

For an hour Prabhupāda led them up and down the unattractive, historic pier. Finally, he stood by the bus about to return. "All religion is useless," he said, "until we know that this world is useless. It is not wanted. That is real knowledge. And when you know this, then there is no attachment. And then immediately no hankering and loss. But now they are hankering, 'I have no girl friend' and then 'I've lost my girl friend.'"

Vāmanadeva had trouble starting the engine, and even after he got it started, it stalled several times on the way back to Hester Street. When Prabhupāda arrived at his house, he said they should sell the bus. Such vehicles presented a bad public image. Having a bus was a good idea, but not a bus like that.

* * *

With Prabhupāda's permission, the devotees scheduled him for the all-night Uncle Jay Show, a talk show on radio station WMEX. At 11:00 P.M. three devotees—Satsvarūpa and Pradyumna, in suits and ties, and Jadurāṇī in a sārī—went on the air. Prabhupāda was scheduled to join them at 3 o'clock.

"I have before me in the studio tonight," Uncle Jay began, "two nice young men and a young woman who have normal American names like Steve and Paul and Judy. And when you hear them speak, they sound like normal Americans. But if you could see them—they look a little unusual. Down the front of their noses they have some white paint..."

Uncle Jay's listeners began calling in questions, and although most of the questions were trivial, the devotees got many good opportunities to talk about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Finally, around 3:00 A.M. Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived. He had risen according to his usual schedule and had come directly to the station. Impressed by Prabhupāda, Uncle Jay received him politely and had him sit down and begin answering questions.

Question: "I heard a swami can't pass over water, so how did you get to the U.S.A.?"

Prabhupāda: "No, why not? That is superstition. Lord Caitanya said to spread this philosophy all over the world, in every town and village. So He certainly knew I would have to cross over the water."

Question: "How did you become a swami?"

Prabhupāda: "Everyone is expected to become a swami. Suppose one lives a hundred years. The fourth state is to renounce and completely be engaged in controlling the senses. So it takes seventy-five years to become a swami."

Question: "Did you give up your wife?"

Prabhupāda: "Woman is not given up. She is always dependent—on her father as a young girl and then on her husband, then on her children, older sons. I was in India recently and my son saw me, but my wife could not see me."

Question: "In this country we would call that desertion."

Prabhupāda: "No, it is a question of progress. There is no divorce. She's a devotee of another swami. The wife generally is not allowed to be the student of her husband who has become a swami."

Question: "Do you believe the soul is immortal?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, you know the soul is immortal. Immortality is not a question of belief. It is a fact. You know what you were in your childhood and your youth..."

Question: "What does it mean in the Bible, 'The soul that sinneth also dieth'?"

Uncle Jay interrupted and said that since this was a question about the Bible, the caller should ask his priest and not trouble the Swami.

But Prabhupāda interrupted: "No, we can answer this. He who identifies with the body commits practical suicide. He forgets himself. Those who are sinful forget their spiritual identity, and they have to take an other body."

Question: "What impelled you to take sannyāsa?"

Prabhupāda: "Routine work. One has to become a swami. It is not a hobby. Because they don't take sannyāsa, they suffer."

Question: "You say meditation is very difficult. How does chanting make it easier?"

Prabhupāda: "At the present moment, meditation in its pure form is not possible. To do it properly, one has to control the senses, follow the rules, practice the sitting posture, thinking, feeling, become absorbed in thought. But chanting—as soon as you hear 'Kṛṣṇa,' immediately the mind is attracted. There is no necessity of prequalification. Anyone in any country can sit down and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and he will find himself in complete meditation."

Uncle Jay: "So Maharishi's transcendental meditation is nothing new?"

Prabhupāda: "No. He says to go and enjoy and simply pay him thirty-five dollars. But you have to control your senses, or how can you meditate? Because you do not want to practice, you do not want to follow. I was surprised that people in America and Western Europe took these cheap things. You don't want the real thing. These yogīs never restrict their students. If they restrict their students, the students do not come and pay the fees."

Uncle Jay: "When I was small, I read a book about swamis who slept on beds of nails. Are you that kind of swami?"

Prabhupāda: "That is just a trick. That is not perfection."

Uncle Jay: "Do you mean when you say swami means 'control of the senses' that if I cut you, you won't feel pain?"

Prabhupāda: "That is not perfection. If you take even chloroform, then you will not feel pain—as in a surgical operation. Control of the senses means that I can be in the midst of beautiful women, but I will feel no desire for sex. I have got sufficient strength, but I have no desire for this. That is real control of the senses."

And so it went until five in the morning.

On the way home, Śrīla Prabhupāda rode in the front seat of the taxi beside the driver. Understanding he had an unusual passenger, the driver—who had been listening to the Uncle Jay Show—asked Prabhupāda, "Are you similar to that transcendental meditation swami?"

"We are similar," Prabhupāda said, "in that he is a Hindu sage and we are a Hindu sage. But his method, meditation, is actually a very difficult process. But ours is very easy—chanting."

* * *

The children on Chester Street would call out "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" whenever they saw Prabhupāda come out of his apartment. They were making fun, but Prabhupāda liked it. Once when a devotee tried to stop the children, Prabhupāda said, "Oh, no, they are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. That's all right." He said Chester Street should now be called Hare Kṛṣṇa Street.

It was in Swamiji's room one day on Hare Kṛṣṇa Street that he accepted the name Prabhupāda. While Govinda dāśī was taking dictation, Prabhupāda mentioned that the affix "ji" was a third-class address.

"Then why do we call you Swami-ji?" she asked. "What should we call you?" "A spiritual master," Prabhupāda replied, "is usually addressed by names like Gurudeva, Viṣṇupāda, or Prabhupāda." "May we call you Prabhupāda?" she asked. "Yes." And Govinda dāśī told the others. At first some of the devotees were reluctant to give up the long-cherished "Swamiji," which for them was a name of affection. "I heard we shouldn't use the name Swamiji anymore," one of the boys asked one morning on a walk. "Who said?" Prabhupāda replied quickly. "They said you said it was third class, and we shouldn't say it."

"I never said that." "Then we can use it?" "Yes, that is all right." But "Swamiji" soon disappeared. Rāya Rāma even printed an explanation in *Back to Godhead*.

PRABHUPĀDA

The word Prabhupāda is a term of utmost reverence in Vedic religious circles, and it signifies a great saint even amongst saints. The word actually has two meanings: first, one at whose feet (pāda) there are many Prabhus (a term meaning "master" which the disciples of a guru use in addressing each other). The second meaning is one who is always found at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa (the supreme master). In the line of disciplic succession through which Kṛṣṇa consciousness is conveyed to mankind there have been a number of figures of such spiritual importance as to be called Prabhupāda. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda executed the will of his master, Śrī Caitanya

Mahāprabhu, and therefore he and his associate Gosvāmīs are called Prabhupāda. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura executed the will of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and therefore he is also addressed as Prabhupāda. Our spiritual master, Om Viṣṇupada 108 Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Swami Mahārāja, has in the same way executed the will of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda in carrying the message of love of Kṛṣṇa to the western world, and therefore the humble servants of His Divine Grace, from all the different centers of the saṅkīrtana movement, are following in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda and prefer to address his grace our spiritual master as Prabhupāda. And he has kindly said, "Yes."

* * *

Prabhupāda's next destination was fixed for Montreal. Satsvarūpa, Pradyumna, and Jadurāṇī, all of whom had drunk deeply of Prabhupāda's personal association, got their last bearings directly from him.

"I am scheduled to leave for Montreal in two days," Prabhupāda said to Satsvarūpa on a morning walk. "Is that all right?" Satsvarūpa felt strange that Prabhupāda would ask him for permission to leave. He also felt sad. But he could think of no way to detain him.

As they walked, they passed a toy store displaying guns and battleships in the window.

"This is the kind of thing we grew up with," Satsvarūpa told Prabhupāda. "But you grew up with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. Does this still affect us?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "the impression is still there."

"Prabhupāda," Satsvarūpa asked, "now that you are with us, we can ask you any necessary direction. But in the future, when you are not always with us, how can we get direction from you?"

"Kṛṣṇa's name is not different than Kṛṣṇa. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Satsvarūpa replied. But he knew his understanding was only theoretical. He knew he would have to think more deeply on Prabhupāda's answer. Prabhupāda was indicating that by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Himself would be present, so the disciple could get direction from Him, by the grace of the spiritual master.

In Jadurāṇī's case there was no doubt that she should continue painting. She had often gone to Prabhupāda's house for detailed instructions. When she had shown him a just-completed portrait of his own spiritual master sitting amidst trees and greenery, Prabhupāda had commented, "You have put my Guru Mahārāja in the American forest! He was never in such a forest." He told her to paint Lord Caitanya in a garden scene but not to copy the Indian print showing an Om sign and Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa above Lord Caitanya's head. "That is an artist's imagination," Prabhupāda said. "This is the way Lord Caitanya appeared in Navadvīpa. Don't change anything. And Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja should be colored as Indians are generally—a light brown, tan like wheat. Balarāmji is colored milk white with little bluish tint and rosy luster."

Prabhupāda also encouraged Pradyumna, telling him just what he wanted to hear: he should continue studying Sanskrit so that he could make transliterations for all of Prabhupāda's work and eventually come to the standard of a good Sanskrit scholar for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Pradyumna asked to come to Montreal with Prabhupāda and learn more things from him. Prabhupāda agreed.

When the day came for Prabhupāda's departure, the devotees accompanied him to the airport. In the departure lounge, an unknown boy suddenly appeared and sat at Prabhupāda's feet. "Can you see God?" the boy asked.

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "At every moment."

"Are you liberated?"

"Yes."

"Then, if you're liberated," the boy challenged, "why don't you go back to the spiritual world—right now?"

"Don't be crazy," said Prabhupāda. "We go when Kṛṣṇa desires. We have already surrendered. So we shall go when Kṛṣṇa desires. We have just bought tickets for Montreal, so we are assured of going there. But it is not that as soon as we buy the tickets, we turn and say, 'Where is Montreal?' No. Everything will happen in due course. We have bought the tickets. We are waiting. Soon the plane will leave."

Prabhupāda advised the boy to stay with the devotees in the Boston temple and hear from them. In time, he said, the boy would be able to understand.

Jadurāṇī: Govinda dāsī and I got on the plane with Prabhupāda, just so we could see him up to the last minute. His last words to us were from the Bhāgavatam. He quoted two verses: *vāsudeva-parā vedā vāsudeva parā yogā/ vāsudeva-param jñānam*... This means that Kṛṣṇa is the goal of yoga, He is the benefactor of fruitive activities, He is the cause of the Vedas—Kṛṣṇa is everything. And I began to cry because Prabhupāda was leaving. He reached over and passed his hand over my face. I asked him, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, sometimes when we ask you something and you give us permission, are you being like the Supersoul? Are you just giving us sanction for what we want?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "When the spiritual master speaks, it is Kṛṣṇa speaking."

When Prabhupāda got to Montreal he wrote me a letter within a day or two, saying, "I am simply remembering your face when you were crying in the plane." And then he gave me an order: "Please don't be agitated in any way. Kṛṣṇa is always with you, and He is always your friend. So many disturbing elements may enter into your life, but a devotee is never agitated."

SPL 59: A Summer in Montreal

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

A Summer in Montreal

= Montreal

June 3, 1968

In Montreal Prabhupāda often sang a Sanskrit prayer composed by a great Vaiṣṇava, King Kulaśekhara. While walking around his room, sitting at his desk, or roaming through the house, he would sing to himself, and the others would hear him. He would chant it—it is a Sanskrit mantra—but to a tune of his own in a voice that dropped to a deep, low tone at the end of a line.

kṛṣṇa tvadīya-pada paṅkaja-pañjarāntam

adyaiva me viśatu mānasa-rāja-haṁsaḥ

prāṇa-prayāṇa-samaye kapha-vāta-pittaiḥ

kaṇṭhāvarodhana-vidhau smaraṇam kutas te

In India almost twenty years ago, Prabhupāda had translated and written commentary on this and several other verses—"The Prayers of King Kulaśekhara"—for his Back to Godhead newspaper. Now, during the summer of 1968, while still recovering from his heart attack of a year ago, he sang this particular verse often. And several times he explained its meaning to the devotees gathered in his room in the evening.

"Swans have a proclivity to stick their long necks underwater and wrap them around the stem of the lotus flower. So King Kulaśekhara is praying, 'My dear Kṛṣṇa, may the swan of my mind enter the network of the stem of Your lotus feet.' He is praying to do so now, at the present moment, while he is healthy and can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and entangle his mind in Kṛṣṇa thought. Therefore, King Kulaśekhara wishes that he may die immediately, because he fears that if he waits until later, when the time of death comes, he will be choking. The elements of his body will be disturbed, and there will be a death rattle, like 'gar, gar.' How will it be possible then to remember Kṛṣṇa?"

Prabhupāda's health, however, had improved. Rising early, dictating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, going for morning walks, taking full lunch—he was the healthiest he had been in months. After lunch he would nap. (At least he would try, although many of the floorboards in the house would squeak loudly when stepped on.) Later in the afternoon he would often ask for watermelon or cantaloupe. And in the evening, either he would meet with devotees in his room or go to the temple for kīrtana and a lecture. After returning at night he would call for "that puffed rice set": puffed rice, fried peanuts, fried potatoes, and slices of cucumber.

So Prabhupāda was well, yet more than once he remarked to his servants, "If I become sick, do not take me to the hospital. Simply let me chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and die."

The summer of 1968 was a relaxed time, without many outside engagements. Prabhupāda would spend most of his time in his apartment on Prince Arthur Street, a five-minute walk from the temple. In his room he would often meet with disciples visiting from various centers in the United States. Sometimes he would sit in a chair on the front lawn, speaking to visitors, or in the later morning sit out back in the driveway, while Gaurasundara massaged him.

One day while Prabhupāda sat in the warm late-morning sun, some of his disciples came and sat on the ground at his feet. "The sunshine is so powerful," Prabhupāda explained. "There are planets where the trees are miles tall, just being supported by the sunshine. And all the planets are supported by the sunshine. It is so powerful."

* * *

One of Prabhupāda's reasons for coming to Canada was to get permanent residency status in both Canada and the United States. While in Boston, he had received an "Order of Denial" from the Immigration Department, directing him to leave the country. For the past three years, except for his six months in India, Prabhupāda had managed to extend his stay in the U.S. by extending his temporary visa; but now, on a technicality, he had been denied permanent residency. From Montreal he wrote the district director of the U.S. Immigration in Boston.

In your Order of Denial, you have clearly mentioned in paragraph four that your denial order was not on the basis of my qualification of Religious Minister, but on your discretion for the reason that I submitted my application just after a fortnight of my arrival in the U.S.A., and as such I was not a bona fide immigrant. I did not know what was the technical mistake on my part in this connection, but I honestly submitted the application after consulting your Calcutta American Consulate and our Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and I have their letters of confirmation with me.

In your Notice of Denial of May 3rd, 1968, you have mentioned that there is no appeal for this decision. As such, I did not prefer to appeal in this decision, but I left the U.S.A. as per your direction. Now I am simply requesting you to give me your valued direction what to do next.

Brahmānanda wrote Prabhupāda from New York explaining his plan to get a lawyer and to appeal. But Prabhupāda, now skeptical of U.S. lawyers, who took money and resolved nothing, chose instead to make a new application as religious minister for ISKCON. Although U.S. Immigration had denied his application, ostensibly on the grounds that he had been in the wrong immigration status, Śrīla Prabhupāda suspected that the State Department was not overly fond of Indian swamis.

I understand that the government of the U.S.A. is disgusted with so-called swamis because they have exploited the people in so many ways. That is a fact. And if I would have been in the government, I would have also considered like that. So they have not got a very good opinion about these rascal swamis. Under the circumstances, it will be difficult to get me admitted as a swami, although I am not a swami of the rascal group. But we have to prove it by action that this Swami is not like those swamis. This remark was made by Mr. Allen Burke of the television company: He introduced me to the public as "Here is a real swami," and he showed me all respectful compliments. Anyway, I am not after respectful compliments by the public. But I am concerned more about my disciples. I want to see them quite able to preach this sublime doctrine of Krishna

consciousness, and therefore I wish to stay. Otherwise, I am not attracted for any place, either hell or heaven.

Prabhupāda accepted the denial of permanent residency in the United States as Kṛṣṇa's desire and blessing. Now, instead of returning to the U.S., he would go to London and the European continent. Mukunda, Śyāmasundara, and other disciples in San Francisco had asked Prabhupāda if they could open a center in London, and on June 7 Prabhupāda replied.

As a sannyas I should not fix up at a certain place and take your service comfortably. It is not the desire of Krishna. He wants me traveling throughout the whole Western part of the world and therefore I think it is Krishna's desire that now I shall start my activities at least for some time in the European countries. So it is almost certain that I am going to London by the month of August. And if you all wish to come there, then you can prepare for the trip.

Prabhupāda's plan was to travel and preach with a party of devotees who would support themselves by distributing Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. But as Śyāmasundara was already building a cart for the second annual Ratha-yātrā festival in San Francisco, and as his wife was pregnant, Prabhupāda advised him to wait. After the Ratha-yātrā festival and after his wife had delivered her baby and taken a month's rest, Śyāmasundara and his family could go to England. Prabhupāda asked that Mukunda also go. "I shall go to England for the time being," Prabhupāda wrote Mukunda, "and start a center there which is long overdue."

But more important than traveling or obtaining permanent residency in the U.S. was the publication of Prabhupāda's books. Prabhupāda felt that writing and printing books was his best contribution in executing his spiritual master's order. So when Brahmānanda came to Montreal from New York with the printer's galley proofs of Bhagavad-gītā and Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Prabhupāda was very pleased.

Macmillan Company was publishing Bhagavad-gītā, and Prabhupāda himself was publishing Teachings of Lord Caitanya through Dai Nippon in Japan. Because Brahmānanda had contacted the editors at Macmillan Company, Prabhupāda credited him with the success of the Gītā's being published by such a famous company. Brahmānanda was also Prabhupāda's man for dealing with Dai Nippon. Both books were on tight printing schedules, and Brahmānanda had to return quickly to New York with the corrected proofs.

Brahmānanda: I came up to show Prabhupāda the galley proofs for both Teachings of Lord Caitanya and Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. I just happened to have both galley proofs that had arrived. So it was a wonderful thing to bring these galley proofs to Prabhupāda for checking. I was there only for a few days, maybe a weekend or so. Prabhupāda personally read through the entire galleys and made notations in his own hand. He did the proofreading of the galleys. Everything was done by Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was a very personal kind of thing. Of course, that gave Prabhupāda great pleasure because he wanted his books published, and we had started to do it. So Prabhupāda took great pleasure in proofreading those galleys. And he handed them to me, and it was very wonderful.

"When one of my books is published," Prabhupāda said, "I feel like I have conquered an empire." Having books in print gave meaning to Prabhupāda's fight for U.S. residency. And only with these books published could he tour Europe. Kṛṣṇa conscious literature was solid evidence that his movement was not a concocted, fly-by-night yogī's dream. Let the government leaders and scholars read these books. Let the student community read them. Any intelligent man would be impressed. These books were the most enduring glorification of Kṛṣṇa and the most powerful propaganda for spreading Kṛṣṇa's teachings throughout the world. Far from being the speculations of an ordinary, conditioned soul subject to mistakes and cheating, these books contained the teachings and activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa—the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—passed down by the great ācāryas. They were books of perfect knowledge.

Before Brahmānanda left Montreal, Prabhupāda asked him to send the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam second and third canto manuscripts from the closet in his New York apartment. By October, as soon as Teachings of Lord Caitanya was printed, he would have the manuscripts ready for Dai Nippon. Speaking to Brahmānanda and others in his room, Prabhupāda charged them with the organization of book sales. There would be no scarcity of books, but his disciples would have to sell them.

When Prabhupāda had been alone in India, he had printed, gathered statements from scholars, advertised, and distributed his books. But now he was depending on his disciples. They recognized the importance of his books, but they had no ideas or means for distributing them. Prabhupāda assured them, however, that by applying his instructions and trusting in Kṛṣṇa for results, they would be successful.

Prabhupāda and Brahmānanda discussed plans for starting their own printing press—perhaps in Montreal. With the costs of printing so high, Prabhupāda wanted some of his disciples to learn the techniques of book publication. He suggested that one of his disciples in New York learn to run a press and some of the girls learn to compose type. Thus in the future he might be able to start his own press in some convenient location.

* * *

Despite Prabhupāda's plans for preaching in Europe, obtaining permanent residency in the United States and Canada, printing his books, and starting a press, his life remained regulated and simple. He would give Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam lectures in the temple and daily see guests in his room. Constantly thinking, writing, chanting, and speaking about Kṛṣṇa and how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda was the driving force of a revolutionary movement. Yet he mostly stayed at home, spending much of his time alone or in simple domestic dealings with his servants.

One quiet afternoon in Prabhupāda's sitting room, Govinda dāśī was bringing Prabhupāda his prasādam when Prabhupāda spied a baby rat running across the floor. Immediately Govinda dāśī set the tray of prasādam down and tried to catch the rat as it darted toward Prabhupāda's desk. Getting up quickly from his seat, Prabhupāda also joined excitedly in the chase. Then another rat appeared. When Harināma, visiting from San Francisco, heard the commotion, he came to the door and offered to help. Taking up a shoebox, he began chasing the rats, finally catching them both and letting them loose outside.

Later Prabhupāda walked into the room where Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī were working and told them, "If you kept everything very clean, these rats wouldn't come. If someone is very much attached to his dwelling, then he may take his next birth in that dwelling as a cockroach or a rat. These are sinful living entities, and they are taking their birth because of that attachment." He then asked Śivānanda to seal up the cracks in the floor.

Sometimes when Prabhupāda criticized Govinda dāsī for her mistakes, she would take it very emotionally and go into the bathroom and cry. One night, while cooking Prabhupāda's "puffed rice set," Govinda dāsī made the peanuts too dark.

"Why are these peanuts black?" Prabhupāda asked as she served him his prasādam. "Why have you made them black?" When Govinda dāsī began to cry, Prabhupāda criticized her all the more: "Why are you crying? You are crying because you are angry. Why have you done this?" His stern and angry look made her tears come even harder.

"I am not angry," she sobbed. "I am very sorry I made the peanuts too dark."

Once Govinda dāsī lent the dictating machine to a Godsister, who broke it, and Prabhupāda became disgusted: "You American boys and girls! You are rich men's sons, so you simply think you can break something and then throw it in the street and buy a new one. You do not take care of such things. Only one person should use a machine. You should not have allowed her to use it." These words devastated Govinda dāsī, and she retired to cry for a while. But she soon recovered, and Prabhupāda acted as if the scene had never taken place. Govinda dāsī took the chastisement as a test of her sincerity. And she had learned that Prabhupāda's thunderbolts were generally followed by his usual kindness and gentleness.

Prabhupāda rarely went anywhere alone. For his disciples it was unthinkable that he should go somewhere without one of them accompanying him to care for his needs or to confront whatever difficulties might arise. So when one afternoon Govinda dāsī looked in Prabhupāda's room and found him gone, she became perplexed. Seeing that his shoes were gone, she ran out to the street. Unable to see him in either direction, she ran down to the corner, where she saw him in the distance, walking away. When she finally caught up to him, she asked in a voice distraught and breathless, "Where are you going? Why have you left?"

Prabhupāda laughed quietly as he walked erect with his cane, his movements flowing. "Oh," he said, "I am just going to the bank. It's all right. I'll be back."

Govinda dāsī apologized for being so demanding. "I just thought you shouldn't go alone. Because you have been ill..."

Prabhupāda snapped back, "What do you know? Physician, heal thyself." And he walked on, leaving Govinda dāsī behind.

As far as Prabhupāda was concerned, it was Govinda dāsī who was sickly, not he. She was always bundled in sweaters and coats or blowing her nose. Once he had gone into the room where she and

Gaurasundara worked, and it had been messy, with tissues thrown here and there. "This is why you are always getting sick," he had said, "because of uncleanness."

Another day Prabhupāda, accompanied by Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī, was walking out of the house on his way to the temple when he began laughing, saying, "Yes, Govinda dāsī, everything is nice! You are an excellent secretary, an excellent cook, and you are good at everything. Your only disqualification is that you are a woman. But don't worry. Next life you shall be a brahmacārī!"

"Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda," Govinda dāsī replied, enjoying Prabhupāda's joking mood.

Gaurasundara was a quiet young man, steady in his duties. He liked to study Prabhupāda's books and could understand the philosophy. Although negligent about studying Bengali and therefore sometimes unable to translate the verses Prabhupāda had assigned, he was a careful servant, and Prabhupāda was pleased with his work.

Often, Prabhupāda, taking the part of the Māyāvādī, would debate with Gaurasundara. Early one morning Śrīla Prabhupāda walked into the room where Gaurasundara was sleeping and woke him with an argument of Māyāvāda philosophy: "Kṛṣṇa's personality must be a product of illusion, because the Absolute is defined as beyond personality." And Gaurasundara had to immediately refute the argument.

Prabhupāda would sometimes remark that eventually Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī should travel together to some part of the world and preach. Kṛṣṇa consciousness had to be introduced in so many places, and Prabhupāda envisioned that one day his servant and secretary would go off to open a new center. "Taking care of my body," he said, "is not such an important thing."

One day Prabhupāda and Gaurasundara were discussing philosophy while Govinda dāsī spent a long time in the kitchen washing pots and dishes. The noise of her cleaning carried into Prabhupāda's room. "She has this cleanliness disease," Prabhupāda warned. "My wife and daughter also had it. You should catch it while it is not developed. Otherwise it will get worse. I caught my daughter once—she was washing the electric sockets by splashing water into them. And I told her, 'Do not ever do this again. If you do this, I will kill you!' So she promised she would never do it again."

* * *

While Prabhupāda was in Montreal, many of his disciples from the United States came to visit him. They were serving on his behalf, some of them thousands of miles away, and the urge to see him would grow until it impelled them to travel to Montreal. Sometimes these visitors would be newcomers who had joined one of Prabhupāda's temples and had heard about him from his disciples but had never seen him. Prabhupāda was always happy, of course, when his disciples remained in their posts, executing their respective duties. But he was also glad when they came to visit him.

Nanda-kiśora: I walked into the room, and Śrīla Prabhupāda greeted me very enthusiastically with a smile and said, "American Vaiṣṇava." I paid obeisances, sat down, and we began to talk. I had heard

that Kṛṣṇa could be in the heart of every living entity at the same time, so I asked Prabhupāda how it was possible.

He began by saying, "Just try to understand." So I tried. I strained and squinted to show that I was really trying to understand. And Prabhupāda continued, "Just like the sun is over your head and mine and is over the head of someone who may be a thousand miles away. That is because the sun is great. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa is so great that He is simultaneously in the hearts of all living entities."

And I understood. He had said, "Try to understand," and because I was hearing, I did understand. I was trying to understand, and I was hearing from the pure devotee. As I was leaving his room, he waved his right hand in the air, sitting back in a very relaxed way, smiling. He said, "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa! Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa!"

Kṛṣṇa dāsa: I had heard that Prabhupāda was planning to travel abroad and that he wanted to take several devotees with him and that whoever wanted to go should save his money. So I got a job with a jewelry firm. Then I had a vacation while Prabhupāda was in Montreal. Uddhava and I were having our vacation at the same time, and we decided over breakfast one morning to go see Prabhupāda in Montreal. In one hour we were packed.

Wearing suits, we hitchhiked from San Francisco to New York in three days. When we got to Montreal, Gaurasundara said, "Well, Prabhupāda is about to have lunch. Would you care to join him?" We said yes. Uddhava and I went in, and Prabhupāda was immediately very thankful that we had come so far to visit him.

But as we had come to lunch so late, there wasn't really enough prasādam for two guests. So Gaurasundara first served Prabhupāda, and we sat there with our empty plates. Then Prabhupāda asked, "What about their food?" Govinda dāsī went to get something for us, and Prabhupāda said to me, "You are very thin. You look sickly. You should eat more." So he proceeded to take food off his plate and put it on my empty plate. And he told me to eat. He said I should eat six capātīs a day. He gave me a whole diet to follow so I could gain weight.

During lunch a mouse came into the room, and Gaurasundara captured it. Prabhupāda joked about how the mouse had been a devotee in his past life and had come back in this life to eat prasādam off the floor. Afterwards we paid our obeisances. I touched my head to Prabhupāda's foot, and he got up and walked over and rubbed our heads.

Jeffrey Hickey (Jagadīśa dāsa): When I entered Prabhupāda's apartment, I got the most amazing feeling. Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja and Hayagrīva were there talking to Prabhupāda about New Vrindaban. They were saying that they had bought some land, and Prabhupāda was encouraging them. I just sat in the back and listened to what was going on.

Prabhupāda's presence was very strong. I felt small. And I had the feeling that he knew everything about me and that I couldn't pretend to be someone big—although previously I had always thought of myself as being a little advanced. But in Prabhupāda's presence I couldn't pose as anything because I understood that he knew everything about me and could understand my mentality. So I just sat with my face turned downwards. Once in a while I would look up at him.

I was in Prabhupāda's room for about half an hour. I wanted to say something, but I didn't know what to say. So at the end, while everyone was leaving, I bowed down and let the others leave first. Then as I was about to leave, I told Prabhupāda that I was chanting sixteen rounds daily and that I expected to get initiated later. He welcomed me to stay in the Montreal temple, and I fumbled some reply.

Vaikuṇṭhanātha: I was in great anxiety because I had just returned from my draft board physical. But as soon as I walked into Prabhupāda's room, all my anxiety completely melted. As soon as I came into his presence, I thought, "How wonderful he is." Spiritual truth became real in his presence.

Śivānanda: I had come to Montreal to visit Prabhupāda, but Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī didn't want many devotees going with him on the morning walk. One morning I was out for a walk by myself when I met Prabhupāda. He motioned to me and said, "Come on." As we walked, I mentioned to Prabhupāda that I had traveled in various places in Europe and all over America, and he said, "Oh, yes, you must go to these places and open some temples."

At that time the word was out that Prabhupāda wanted some of his disciples to go to London to open a temple there. So as I was walking along with Śrīla Prabhupāda—we were just about to cross the street—Prabhupāda turned to me and said, "Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad-gītā that "One who is spreading My teachings of Bhagavad-gītā to the devotees is the most dear to Me, and there is never one who is more dear."" Then Prabhupāda added, "Our business is to become dear to Kṛṣṇa." That started me thinking about opening a center somewhere.

In the evenings devotees and guests would crowd into Prabhupāda's room to sit with him. Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī would attempt to confine the devotees to Prabhupāda's visiting hours, but their restraints were not very strong, and Prabhupāda himself would often override them. Prabhupāda was more relaxed in his room than in the temple, and he would laugh and speak about many different things.

Brahmānanda: Prabhupāda would just talk. Often there wouldn't be any questions, and he would just get on a topic and talk, sitting casually. Sometimes it wouldn't even be directly about Kṛṣṇa, but he would describe different things about life in India or some other topic. He would always make sure that everyone had some prasādam. One night he was explaining to a visitor that his disciples—"these American boys and girls"—were taking up Kṛṣṇa consciousness naturally, not artificially. He referred to his servant Gaurasundara: "Actually, he is doing so many nice things for me all day long because he loves me. It is not artificial."

Govinda dāsī: One time there was an elaborate discussion about whether trains were better than buses or buses were better than trains. Another time Prabhupāda was talking about liquor, and I said, "Oh, Śrīla Prabhupāda, whiskey tastes awful!" He was shocked. He said, "Oh. You have tasted?" He was surprised that I had tasted liquor. He talked in detail about Bengal tigers and all sorts of other things.

Most of the devotees were not so astute—most of us were just recovering from being hippies and taking drugs—but everyone loved him very much. Actually, there was no name and fame. There was no money. There was no position. The center of our service, the motivating factor, was simply love of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Nanda-kiśora: Prabhupāda explained how he had first seen snow when he had come to America. He said, “One day I looked out the window and I thought, ‘Oh, someone has taken lime and thrown it all over.’ And then I looked up at the sky and thought, ‘Oh, they are still throwing.’ ” And then he laughed. I could hardly believe he had never seen snow fall before. He was like a child. He said such things so beautifully, like an innocent child, that whatever doubt I had was just wiped away due to the beauty of his expression.

Satyabhāmā: Prabhupāda told a story about a man from Calcutta who could tell the make of any car just by hearing it. I think Prabhupāda was making an important philosophical point, but I forget the point. Anyway, this man's friend wanted to test the other man's ability to judge cars just by their sound. So together they went and stood on a street corner in Calcutta. The friend blindfolded the other man, and as each car passed by, the man would identify it: “That is a Cadillac..., that is a Buick...” Then a donkey came walking by, dragging some tin cans, and the man said, “Oh, that is a Ford.”

Kṛṣṇadāsa and Uddhava told Prabhupāda about the San Francisco Ratha-yātrā, and they handed him a newspaper clipping. Prabhupāda read the headline aloud: “S.F. Paraders Hail Hindu God Krishna.” After noting with pleasure the large photo of devotees pulling the ropes of the “2½ ton wagon on long haul to celebrate Ratha-yātrā festival,” he handed the newspaper back to Kṛṣṇadāsa: “Read it.” After hearing the article, Prabhupāda praised the devotees—especially Śyāmasundara and Jayānanda—for constructing an attractive cart and holding such a successful festival.

Then Prabhupāda began to talk of other successes within his new movement. He had heard reports that in San Francisco Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had organized the devotees to go out and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa every day and that in one day they had sold a hundred copies of Back to Godhead. Devotees in New York and Boston, he said, were also going out and chanting, distributing magazines, and collecting as much as forty dollars in a day. He told the disciples gathered in his room that they should all expect to perform public kīrtana in the important cities of the world. Taking mṛdaṅgas and karatālas, they could perform kīrtana anywhere and get the blessings of Lord Caitanya. In this way their numbers would increase. Prabhupāda told them, “If you want to live alone in a secluded place and practice yoga for your own personal advantage, that is very good. But if you want to help others by spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that is far better.”

Prabhupāda said that although a Kṛṣṇa conscious person is not anxious on his own behalf, he is anxious for those who are not Kṛṣṇa conscious, the mass of people who simply engage in sense gratification within a civilization of illusion. Quoting the great ācārya Jīva Gosvāmī, Prabhupāda said that a devotee who chooses to sit in Vṛndāvana and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa should make only one or two disciples; but a missionary, who preaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, should make as many disciples as possible.

"So you are being initiated," Prabhupāda addressed the devotees in his room, "therefore you should make it your responsibility and duty to spread this message—to follow the principles strictly and become pure Vaiṣṇavas and preach all over the world. Don't worry about where you will sleep or eat, Kṛṣṇa will see to all these things. You simply have to become sincere in service. That's all. Just be sincere."

Govinda dāsī raised her hand. "Prabhupāda," she asked, "what does it mean exactly to surrender?"

"Surrender," Prabhupāda replied, "is to know that 'I am nothing...'" As Prabhupāda spoke, Govinda dāsī, accustomed to taking dictation, wrote down the answer, while other devotees—some seated on the floor around Prabhupāda's desk, some standing in the doorway—listened attentively. "I should know," Prabhupāda continued, "I am less than the stool of a hog. And Kṛṣṇa—You are everything. That is very difficult. We can find millions of Isaac Newtons and Einsteins, but one very rare soul might be surrendered to Kṛṣṇa. Because it is very difficult. So as long as you are thinking that 'He is more learned than me' or 'I am more learned than him'—that is material. You must know that you are nothing and surrender."

A new boy who had been attending Śrīla Prabhupāda's classes asked, "Why is it that one time I feel this way, like you say, 'surrendered,' but at other times I forget?"

Prabhupāda: "That is māyā. That is our battle with māyā. We are in māyā's kingdom, so we have to fight. It is like an ocean, birth and death. There are so many universes and so many species of life, and we are transmigrating birth after birth. It is like you are standing on the edge of a boat, and just a little shove and you may fall into the ocean. Then you do not know where you are going, here or there. So it is like that. If you want to keep back even one percent—to surrender all but one percent—then you have to stay here. Kṛṣṇa is so strict. If you have any desire for material enjoyment, you have to remain. Just one percent may take millions of years. So you have to surrender everything.

"Kṛṣṇa consciousness is already there within you and within everyone, but it has to be invoked. It is like a match, and if you rub it, fire comes out. And that rubbing process is chanting. So we have to inject Kṛṣṇa consciousness into the ear, and we have to go on injecting. Wherever you go, you have to chant—and without any motive."

Gaurasundara brought in a plate of cut fruit, which Śrīla Prabhupāda distributed to each person. It was late, but Prabhupāda continued speaking: "People want to go on asking God for bread. But as soon as there is bread elsewhere, they won't go to church. But if you teach people to love God—that they will never forget." Prabhupāda smiled. Finally the devotees left him, satisfied. They would see him in the temple in the morning.

* * *

Montreal temple, established now for a year and a half, occupied a former bowling alley on the third floor of a building near McGill University. Although the gutters on either side of the eight bowling lanes had been filled in with wood, thus creating a smooth, level floor, the eight hardwood lanes were still prominent. An altar and vyāsāsana stood against one wall, and a temporary wall

partitioned off the men's quarters. There was also a kitchen and separate quarters for the women. With difficulty Prabhupāda would daily climb the two flights of stairs and enter the spacious temple room. On the day of his arrival in Montreal, several devotees had carried him up the stairs in a palanquin, but the winding staircase made that too difficult to do daily. So Prabhupāda chose to walk.

The original Montreal devotee was Janārdana, a Canadian attending McGill University. Janārdana wore a beard and long hair, even after his initiation, and lived in an apartment with his wife, who was staunchly opposed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Acknowledging Janārdana as an intellectual, Prabhupāda had written him long letters answering his philosophical doubts and requesting that he write essays and books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

When the temple had first opened, the McGill Daily had given Janārdana a full page to introduce Swami Bhaktivedanta and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The headlines had read, "Mind Expansion Under Spiritual Guidance." Montreal's French daily newspaper, *Le Nouveau Samedi*, interviewed Janārdana and published an article: "They claim that the Hindu God Krishna is the Father of Christ and that the inhabitants of the moon are invisible."

About a dozen members had joined the Montreal temple, but so far they had done little to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Montreal. They had spent most of their energy maintaining themselves spiritually and financially. Although they had held some public kīrtanas at the 1967 World's Fair, mostly they had concentrated on transforming the bowling alley, cleaning, cooking for Kṛṣṇa, and meeting together for classes and kīrtanas.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda saw Janārdana's academic studies distracting him from temple management, he asked Janārdana to appoint a temple commander. One night when Prabhupāda came to the temple for his lecture, as soon as he sat on the vyāsāsana, he looked out to Janārdana and asked, "So, have you found a temple commander yet?"

"Oh, no," Janārdana replied, "not yet."

Prabhupāda then turned toward the altar and beheld the Deities. "That's all right," he said. "Lord Jagannātha is the temple commander. We are His servants."

* * *

One evening in the temple, as Prabhupāda concluded his lecture about Prahāda Mahārāja, he asked if there were any questions. Himāvatī, one of the women disciples, raised her hand.

Prabhupāda: "Yes?"

Himāvatī: "Prahāda Mahārāja was such a great devotee that he said, 'nothing is mine.' But then why does he say 'my God'? How could God become his? Why does he say that?"

Prabhupāda: "Then what shall he say?"

Himāvatī: "I don't understand. How can he say it? If you understand nothing belongs to you, then how can you say, "God is mine'?"

Prabhupāda: Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of everyone. Therefore everyone can say "my Lord.' That does not mean if somebody says "my Lord,' God becomes monopolized. You are speaking on the platform of monopolizing, "mine.' But God is never monopolized. He is everyone's. So everyone has the right to say "my God, my Lord.' In the material sense, when I say, "It is my wife,' that means she is not any other's wife. But God is not like that. I can say "my God,' but you can also say "my God,' he can say "my God,' everyone can say "my God.' This is the absolute "mine.'

"Kṛṣṇa says, "All these living creatures are My parts and parcels.' Mamaivamiṁśo. Mama means "My.' So why the living creatures shall not say "my God'? Do you follow? Kṛṣṇa says, "You are Mine.' Why shall I not say, "Kṛṣṇa, You are mine'? Your husband says, "You are mine.' Why shall you not say to him, "You are mine'? But don't take it in the material sense. In material sense, as soon as I say, "This is mine,' then it belongs to no one else. It is my property. But Kṛṣṇa is not like that. So you can say, "Kṛṣṇa is mine.' There is no harm. Rather, if anyone wants to possess something as his, that position should be Kṛṣṇa's. That is the ultimate conception of "mine.' That is the perfection of the word "mine.'

"So this is quite nice, quite fit. In the Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa says, "He is Mine, and I am his.' Kṛṣṇa says. So this is not wrong. And what is your idea? That because everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa therefore I shall not say "mine'? That's your idea?"

Himāvatī: "I didn't understand this, that Kṛṣṇa is the Lord. So my Lord is everyone else's Lord."

Prabhupāda: "Yes."

Himāvatī: "He is the controller, and that's why He is mine."

Prabhupāda: "He's mine, He's yours, everyone's. That's all."

Himāvatī: "I can understand."

Prabhupāda: "That's all."

Rukmiṇī: "I feel so far away from you, you know, when you are not here."

Prabhupāda: "What is that? I can't follow. Janārdana?"

Janārdana: "She is saying she felt so far away from you when you were not here."

Prabhupāda: "Oh, that you should not think. There are two conceptions, the physical conception and the vibration conception. The physical conception is temporary, and the vibration conception is eternal. Just like we are relishing the vibration of Kṛṣṇa's teaching. So my vibration is also present. As soon as we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa or chant Bhagavad-gītā or the Bhāgavat, so Kṛṣṇa is

present immediately by vibration. He is absolute. Therefore vibration is more important than physical presence.

“When you feel separation from your spiritual master, you just try to remember his words and his instructions, and you will not feel separation. You will feel like he is with you. So we should associate by the vibration, not by the physical presence. That is real association—śabdat anavṛtti—by sound. Just like we are touching Kṛṣṇa immediately by sound. So we should give more stress on this sound vibration, either of Kṛṣṇa or of the spiritual master. Then we will feel happy and no separation.

“When Kṛṣṇa departed from this world, at that time Arjuna was overwhelmed with sorrow, and he began to remember the instruction of Bhagavad-gītā. Then he was pacified. Immediately he began to remember the teaching which was taught to him on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, and he was pacified. Kṛṣṇa was his constant friend, so when the Lord went to His abode, Arjuna was feeling overwhelmed. But he began to remember His teachings. So whenever we shall feel separation, the best thing is to remember the teachings. Then it will be very nice. Is that clear?”

Rukmiṇī: “Yes.”

One of the girls asked, “Prabhupāda, will you be our father eternally? Will you always be our spiritual master, eternally?”

Jokingly, Prabhupāda said, “Yes, I think so.” Then he quoted a verse, cakhudāna dilo yei janme janme prabhu sei, but he said, “ñjanme jan me pītā sei. The one who has opened my eyes—he is my father life after life.”

Prabhupāda was concerned about the weak financial condition of the Montreal temple. Although some of the devotees were employed, their work wasn't very auspicious. One disciple had a job—at the No Sags Spring Factory—which Prabhupāda called “ugra-karma,” bitter, unwholesome labor. When Nanda-kīśora told Prabhupāda about his job as a busboy in a restaurant, Prabhupāda replied, “Oh, a blind uncle.” Nanda-kīśora looked puzzled. Prabhupāda told him the story of a boy who had no uncle. One day a blind man came to the boy's home and said, “I will be your uncle.” “Well,” the boy replied, “a blind uncle is better than no uncle.” But when Nanda-kīśora told Prabhupāda the details of his work and that he was sometimes cooking meat, Prabhupāda remarked, “Oh, but not so blind.”

The question of financing the Montreal temple puzzled Prabhupāda, and he carefully analyzed the situation. There were two paths of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he said: one for those who were renounced, eating fruits from the trees and living in caves; and the other for those who were married and honestly employed, like Kṛṣṇa's friend Arjuna. Both paths were good, but the question for Prabhupāda was which path his disciples should take. If they attempted to take the path of ascetics like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, they would probably remain hippies, and Prabhupāda wanted many big centers with respectable guests coming to take prasādam. Yet if to maintain such temples the devotees had to engage in ugra-karma, then who would preach? It was a puzzle.

"I have either to stop this brahminical system," Prabhupāda said, "or I have to have brāhmaṇas work." He thought of starting his own business; he had had a little capital, and there was organization. Then he thought of enlisting the support of the Indians in Montreal.

Montreal had a large Indian community, and families were already attending the Sunday feast at the temple. Of those who came forward to meet Prabhupāda, the most promising was young Gopal Khana, a business major at McGill University. Although raised in an orthodox Hindu family, Gopal knew little of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy.

The day before Śrīla Prabhupāda had arrived in Montreal, Gopal had received an invitation card from a devotee. Because for the past year Gopal had been seriously wanting to understand God, he had been interested. In his spiritual search he had been attending services at a Hindu temple in Toronto as well as visiting various other churches and temples; he had given up meat-eating and smoking. On coming to the temple and seeing the excitement of the devotees in preparing for Prabhupāda's arrival, Gopal had asked to help, so one of the devotees had instructed him to help clean Prabhupāda's apartment. Prabhupāda had taken an interest in Gopal, who, although he had never met a sādhu before and didn't know what to think at first, respected Prabhupāda.

A friend of Gopal's, a Mr. Mukerjee from Calcutta, also began attending Prabhupāda's lectures. Mr. Mukerjee, who claimed to have spiritual knowledge, told Gopal that, although he had touched the feet of many Indian sādhus throughout India, never had he met anyone as saintly as Prabhupāda. Gopal took his friend's endorsement of Prabhupāda very seriously, and soon he was attending all the lectures in the temple and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on his beads, acting like a regular devotee. He would usually be the only Indian to remain through the kīrtana and lecture in the temple. Then afterwards he would stay and have hot milk with the devotees, returning home around nine-thirty.

Associating with the devotees and being of the same age as they, Gopal automatically included himself among the intimate disciples who regularly visited Prabhupāda at his apartment. Prabhupāda asked Gopal about his family and background in India and encouraged him to take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When Gopal told Prabhupāda that he had been chanting om̐, Prabhupāda explained that by itself om̐ was incomplete. If he wanted to chant om̐, Prabhupāda said, then he should chant om̐ kṛṣṇa.

One night Gopal was present as Prabhupāda discussed the financial problems of the Montreal temple. Although the temple rent was only \$150 and expenses were minimal, the devotees were struggling. At one point in the discussion Prabhupāda turned to Gopal and asked, "So, Gopal, what is your solution to this financial problem?" Guessing that Prabhupāda might be hinting for him to contribute money, Gopal said he didn't have a solution.

Prabhupāda lectured at a nearby Christian school, and Gopal and his friend Mr. Mukerjee attended. When, after the kīrtana and lecture, Prabhupāda asked if there were any questions, Mr. Mukerjee raised his hand, stood up, and, to the shock of the devotees, began insulting Prabhupāda.

"It is not a fact that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead," Mr. Mukerjee said before the hall filled with Christian students and ministers. "You should not speak like this in a church. Why do you say that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme and that we should surrender to Him?"

Prabhupāda remained calm. Although the attending devotees, looking furiously at Mr. Mukerjee, could barely restrain themselves, Prabhupāda didn't even speak. He simply called on someone else in the audience and allowed the unpleasant event to pass.

Some days later Prabhupāda asked Gopal about Mr. Mukerjee, who hadn't come by recently. To Gopal's surprise, Prabhupāda asked to see Mr. Mukerjee again. Gopal, considering Mr. Mukerjee too envious and blasphemous, advised Prabhupāda against it. "No, it does not matter," Prabhupāda said. "I must have done something against him in my past life, and now he has taken his revenge. Please call him."

Gradually some of the Indian visitors responded to Śrīla Prabhupāda and began to give money to support the temple. Most of them, however, were reluctant to spend money or time apart from their careers and families. Indian culture, Prabhupāda said, had completely fallen, due partly to foreign invasions into India and partly to India's leaders' madly abandoning their original culture in favor of Western materialism. "But still," Prabhupāda told the devotees, "if there is any civilization left any where, it is in India. In India they are all originally Kṛṣṇa conscious, and with a little chanting and taking prasādam their material covering can be removed."

Prabhupāda compared modern-day Indian civilization to a dead elephant. An elephant is such a valuable creature that even when dead, because of its tusks and hide, it remains almost as valuable as when alive and working. Similarly, although the Indian culture was practically dead, India still had great potential. Most Indians in the villages still retained a simple faith that their present suffering was due to karma of their past lives and that they would have to transmigrate to another body in their next life. That basic transcendental knowledge, commonly understood by the Indian masses, was unknown in the West even to the most sophisticated and advanced members of society.

But Prabhupāda was sorry to see the Indians in the West abandoning their piety and taking the cheap life of sense gratification. He compared the Indian immigrants to the "new crows." When crows eat garbage, after a while they are full. But if a new crow arrives, he becomes especially eager. Similarly, many Indians, newly arrived in the West, were more eager for material advancement than the Westerners. Yet despite Prabhupāda's criticism of Indians, whenever he met anyone of Indian birth—in the temple, in his room, or elsewhere—he seemed to become especially sympathetic and friendly, conversing with them in Hindi or Bengali as if talking with old, familiar friends.

* * *

Janārdana was concerned about presenting Kṛṣṇa consciousness to Montreal's main religious contingent, the Catholics. Because he came from a French-Canadian Catholic family, Janārdana thought Prabhupāda and his disciples should learn to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness in terms of Biblical teachings. It was possible, Prabhupāda agreed, but it would require great expertise. It would be better, he said, to stress the universal, nonsectarian nature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and all other religions had some idea of God, though not much realization of pure love for God. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, was like a postgraduate study for persons of all religions. Prabhupāda requested his disciples not to divert their attention to criticizing the

Christian or any other sectarian faith. Rather, they should simply preach Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

When Śivānanda and Nanda-kīśora brought an Indian Christian to Prabhupāda's apartment, Prabhupāda demonstrated the art of preaching to a committed follower of a sectarian religious faith. "We don't say you have to be this religion or that," Prabhupāda told the man. "The real test of religion is how one is awakening his dormant love for God." Prabhupāda went on—without attacking the man's religious affiliation—to describe the degradation of Kali-yuga. "At the present moment," he said, "never mind whether one is Christian, Hindu, Jew, or Muslim, most people are godless and don't care for God. They simply take an official stand. But actually, in the depth of their heart, they have no idea what God is. If a Christian believes in God, let him love God more prominently than matter." The man agreed.

Janārdana took Prabhupāda to see some of the great cathedrals in Montreal. Entering the spacious Notre Dame, Prabhupāda said, "Yes, this is worship of God as Lord Nārāyaṇa—in awe and reverence." The church tour impressed Śrīla Prabhupāda, and the next day he revealed his thoughts in a letter to Aniruddha.

Yesterday, Janardana took me to a nice church here called Notre Dame, a very nice wooden structural workmanship with colorful figures and windows, decorated with nicely painted pictures of the crucifixion of Lord Jesus Christ. Everything was grotesque. Generally, the Roman Catholic religion depends on this crucifixion incident in the life of Lord Jesus Christ, but I think depiction of this incident simply stimulates the tensions of differences of opinion, and differences of religious principles, between Jews and Christians. My idea is that, if simply by narrating the crucifixion incident of Lord Jesus Christ, the Roman Catholic religion can spread to such a wide area of the world, how much there is great potency of spreading our Krishna consciousness by depicting many hundreds and thousands of such incidents in different appearances of the incarnations of Lord Krishna.

Prabhupāda and Janārdana visited another church, which displayed the relics of a saint who had been adept at healing. Walking through the exhibit of the saint's clothing, desk, bed, and personal effects, Prabhupāda was unimpressed. "Just see," he said. "They are adoring him for healing bodies that are now dead. But they do not take interest in the healing of a soul in his eternal situation."

Questions about Christ and the Bible often arose after Prabhupāda's classes in the temple. One night Prabhupāda explained that even the most learned man studies in terms of the body only. Although a person may have many Ph.D.'s and may be talking philosophy, when he is asked, "Do you know what the soul is?" he will stop.

A man raised his hand. "I have here a Holy Bible," he began. "Yes," Prabhupāda acknowledged.

"So the Holy Bible is also written by the Holy Spirit of mankind. Should we believe in the Bible or not?"

"You can say it is written by mankind, but so far as I know, those who wrote, wrote with revelation."

"The Holy Spirit?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda said. "Therefore, you should read. Otherwise, if a man writes a book on his own, he will write on his own experience. And it will be imperfect."

"You were speaking about men only knowing the body. What about the body of Christ?"

"Body of Christ is not ordinary body," Prabhupāda said. "That is spiritual body. Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad-gītā: sambhavāmy-ātma-māyayā. So this is a very subtle point. One has to understand that when God comes or God's son comes or God's representative comes, they do not accept a body like us. They have their spiritual body."

"Kṛṣṇa means Christ," the man replied. "He's the whole spirit. So we are also in the body of man. That is the body of God?"

"No," Prabhupāda replied. "The body of man is not exactly the body of God. With God there is no difference between the body and the soul because He is all-spiritual. Just like if you have a golden body and a golden soul—then there is no difference between the soul and the body. But in our case, as we are, we are spirit soul, but the body is material. Therefore I am different from this body. But when we are liberated, we get a spiritual body like Kṛṣṇa's. At the present moment there is a difference between our body and soul. Therefore, as soon as a soul goes away from the body, the body, being matter—"Dust thou art, dust thou be-est"—mixes with the matter, and the soul takes another body. The whole problem is that we have to stop repetition of migration from one material body to another material body. That is the highest perfection of life."

During Prabhupāda's stay in Montreal, Janārdana showed him several news items concerning Pope Paul VI. The Pope was staunchly supporting the Catholic stand against abortion, despite a large protest movement within the church. Prabhupāda admired the Pope for upholding the scriptures, even though millions of Catholics didn't; he decided to write him. He had tried such things before: writing to Gandhi and writing to Nehru. And in that same spirit he dictated a letter one morning and sent it to the Vatican.*

In his letter, Prabhupāda explained his personal background and mission. He then defined love of God (as it is explained in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam) and stated that human life is especially meant for learning to love God. Noting that people were mostly interested in sense gratification, Prabhupāda remarked, "This tendency is very much deteriorating. Because Your Holiness is the Head of a great religious sect, I think we should meet together and chalk out a program for cooperation."

Prabhupāda went on to describe some of the symptoms of society as degradation, including the pro-abortion movement within the Catholic faith. "I understand it from reliable sources," Prabhupāda wrote, "that people are trying to get Your Holiness's sanction for contraceptive method, which is certainly against any religion of the world. In the Hindu religion, such contraceptive method or abortion is considered equivalent to murder." Prabhupāda said the same degradation was affecting India, and he suggested that the guardians of society treat this situation as a very serious one. Prabhupāda closed his letter, "If you think that a meeting with You will be beneficial

for the human society at large, I shall be very much pleased if Your Holiness will grant me an interview."

Janārdana mixed with many liberal, academic religionists interested in ecumenical aspects of religion, and he wanted to introduce Prabhupāda to these scholars of various faiths. He arranged a private get-together at a friend's house, and Prabhupāda very willingly went and spoke about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The next day he summarized his experience in a letter to Satsvarūpa.

Yes, I am getting good opportunities to meet here several learned scholars. Last night we had a meeting in the house of Mr. Abdul Rabbi, and there were some university professors and a Dr. Abbott, a Dr. MacMillan, and many others. Two clergymen were with their wives. One Father Lanlais was without a wife. So there was a very good discussion, and by the grace of Krishna, I was able to give them some impression of this philosophy, that it is nicer than anything. Professor Abdul is Mohammedan, and he is writing a thesis of Sufi religion. And he was also impressed. Unfortunately, I had to eat there, but I accepted a little fruits only, while they were eating all sorts of nonsense, but at least they did not drink. We were the only two persons, Janardana and myself, who avoided all kinds of nonsense.

Prabhupāda attended a more formal ecumenical meeting, a religious conference. About fifty people, including Prabhupāda and a group of his devotees, attended. A panel, representing various religions, honored Prabhupāda as the main speaker as well as a member of the panel. Prabhupāda lectured. After the lecture, a Catholic priest asked how Prabhupāda could be so sure of his statements about God.

"Why not?" Prabhupāda said. "What is the difficulty? I have consciousness. There is God. Now I have forgotten Him. I have to revive my consciousness of God. What is difficult in knowing that much?" The questioners were not his submissive young disciples, and this was not Prabhupāda relaxed and sitting back on a pillow in his room. He was alert, logical, and very sociable. But some of the panel were not satisfied with his presentation. The moderator took up their cause.

Moderator: "Are you saying that you are perfect?"

Prabhupāda: "I am imperfect—that's all right. But I know what is perfection."

Moderator: "But I cannot see that."

Prabhupāda's disciples laughed at this, and Prabhupāda turned to reprimand them: "Don't laugh." Then returning to his debate with the moderator: "Therefore, you are here. You have to go to London. If you have purchased a ticket for London and if you have gotten to the airplane, so even if you have not gone to London, you are sure that you are going to London."

Moderator: "Yes, I can be sure. I understand that. I have no doubt about that. But how can your security—"

Prabhupāda: "No, no. If I have understood that my destination is London, I feel secure that I am going to London. Then that is my happiness."

Moderator: "So you are completely happy."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, because I know that if I go to London I will be happy. And I am going there."

Moderator: "But you're not in London yet."

Prabhupāda: "That's all right!" Prabhupāda raised his voice confidently. "I have already told you that when you purchase a ticket and you understand that you are surely going to London—that is happiness."

Moderator: "But then there is no question."

Prabhupāda: "Hmm? But what is this? If my destination is London, why then question? There is no need of question."

Moderator: "Well, then why a conference with men of other religions?" The other panel members listened intently as the moderator pursued a line of argument many of them empathized with. They wanted to see Prabhupāda defeated.

Prabhupāda: "That conference is used to consult together that London is the destination."

Moderator: "But then you know the destination."

Prabhupāda: "Right."

Moderator: "The idea that you have behind your mind is to tell other people where the destination is."

Prabhupāda: "Yes."

Moderator: "Not to search for it with them."

Prabhupāda: "No, I don't say search. I have already searched out."

Moderator: "Yeah. So then I feel myself that this is not a conference."

Prabhupāda: "Hmm? Then if I have got some good news to tell you, it is not conference?" Prabhupāda's disciples burst into laughter despite themselves. This time Prabhupāda did not check them. He was too busy, too alert with the debate, as several persons started talking at once.

Panel member: "As far as you are concerned, it may be London. As far as I am concerned, it may be Paris or Hawaii."

Prabhupāda: "No, then we have to consider where is real happiness, whether it is in Hawaii or in Paris or—"

Moderator: "You! But if you are not willing to concede"—the moderator could not help becoming accusative in his tone—"that it is not London, and if I say I am not going to that place—"

Prabhupāda: "That is going on, that is going on. There are innumerable planets, and in the Bhagavad-gītā it is said: *yānti deva-vratā devān pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ*. So if you think that London is not good for you, Paris is good for you, then it is good for you."

Another panel member (with a German accent): "Well, therefore, conference is all useless."

Prabhupāda: "No. If you don't agree, if you do not understand what is the highest goal, then conference is useless. If you keep yourself to the understanding where you are, then there is no need of conference." Several persons, some on the panel and some even in the audience, began to speak at once in protest of Prabhupāda's remarks.

Prabhupāda: "That is conference—I want to convince you that London is the real place of happiness."

Moderator: "But I think that I know better than you."

Prabhupāda: "You may think, but you have to be convinced that your thinking is wrong."

Moderator: "Or maybe I can convince you that your thinking is wrong."

Prabhupāda: "That's all right. Therefore, conference is required." Prabhupāda began to laugh. Finally everyone laughed, and the tension that had been building to animosity relaxed. But the formal order of the conference had been lost, and now everyone began to speak at once.

Moderator: "Excuse me, Swamiji, but the time is running out..."

Prabhupāda: "Yes."

Moderator: "And I would like to thank you very much for coming."

Prabhupāda: "Now you are convinced that conference is required?"

Moderator: "Yes."

Prabhupāda: "You have to convince me, and I will have to convince you."

Moderator: "And I think that's true. These confrontations, these listenings, lead to further understanding."

The program ended, and the crowd began dispersing, talking among themselves, moving out into the summer evening. The moderator, still intellectually piqued by Prabhupāda's brand of ecumenicity, approached Prabhupāda amid the crowd moving toward the exit.

"The question is," the young minister pursued, "where should we go, if you believe that you must go to London, yet I believe very strongly I must go to India, and I am convinced that, at least for me, India is wonderful?"

Prabhupāda: "No. If you are convinced that going to India is good for you, so similarly you must accept that going to London is also nice."

Minister: "Yes. But so may you also be convinced that India is better than London."

Prabhupāda: "Yes, if you can convince me."

Minister: "But if you believe that you cannot be convinced..."

Prabhupāda: "No. You can convince if we are reasonable."

Minister: "But then we have to search together to become complete."

Prabhupāda: "No, my version is complete."

Minister: "Then I cannot convince you of anything."

Prabhupāda: "No. Why not? You have got reason, I have got reason. You have to show me that there are favorable conditions in Paris or India..."

Minister: "But how can I convince you, because you say that you cannot—"

Prabhupāda: "No, no, no, no. Convince means you have to convince me with your reasoning power of presentation."

* * *

August 1968

Śrīla Prabhupāda was in his room with several devotees. "So, Annapūrṇa," Prabhupāda said, "you have got some news?" Annapūrṇa was a young British girl. A few months previously her father had written her from England that he might be able to provide a house if a group of devotees came to England.

"Yes," Annapūrṇa replied.

"So, what is our next program?"

Annapūrṇa was reticently shy. Once before, when Prabhupāda had asked her whether she chanted sixteen rounds a day, she had blushed, stammered, and then, on the verge of tears, had said, "Some days I chant more than sixteen rounds!" And Prabhupāda had had to laugh.

"That letter from your father is encouraging?" Prabhupāda inquired further.

"Yes," Annapūrṇa answered. "He encourages me. But he says he can't provide any place if we come there."

"That's all right," Prabhupāda said, a little disappointed. "It's up to Kṛṣṇa. When we go to someone to preach, we have to stand before them with folded hands, with all humility: 'My dear sir, please take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.' "

"Swamiji?" Pradyumna asked. "I was reading a book by Vivekananda."

"Hmm?"

"There are some letters in the back of the book, and I was looking at them."

"Vivekananda book we have nothing to do with," Prabhupāda said curtly.

"I wasn't looking at his philosophy," Pradyumna explained. "I was just looking at his techniques for when he was in America. He wished to go to Europe. So he had one man who was a rich benefactor, and he went on a six-week tour of France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and then back. That's how he did most of his tour. He had one or two influential people, and he did everything just like that. And the lectures were arranged, and the society..."

"So, can you arrange like that?" Prabhupāda asked.

"I was thinking that there would be a Royal Asiatic Society in London. I think Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda was a member of that."

"But where is Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda's saṅga*?" Prabhupāda asked.

"No," Pradyumna continued, "but there will still be some people there that we might open correspondence with. They might be interested in sponsoring you."

"Is there anything about Kṛṣṇa in Vivekananda's speech?" Prabhupāda asked.

"No, I wasn't reading his speeches."

Prabhupāda sat thoughtfully. If he were to go to England, he would have no place to stay. Pradyumna might talk of influential persons traveling ahead and making all arrangements, but where were such persons? Here was a shy girl who could hardly speak up and whose father would not help, and Pradyumna reading Vivekananda and talking of a Royal Asiatic Society—but nothing practical. Prabhupāda had also been thinking of sending some devotees to London right away and then joining them later. He wanted to start something in Europe as soon as possible. Mukunda and Śyāmasundara were eager to go and would be arriving in Montreal in a few days.

“Prabhupāda?” Śivānanda spoke up, breaking the silence.

“Yes.”

“May I go to England?” Śivānanda had asked once before, and Prabhupāda had told him no, that he should stay in Montreal and help. He was only twenty, and his desire to go seemed to be mostly restlessness. He was sincere but inexperienced. But now he was asking again—and it was timely.

“My mother will give me money for the trip,” Śivānanda continued. “She says it’ll be all right as long as I go back to college after opening a temple there.”

Prabhupāda nodded. “Yes, that’s all right. You can go. You are sincere. But be careful. I was an old Calcutta boy, and so when I came to New York I never got cheated.”

Prabhupāda’s spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, had wanted to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Europe. He had sent his most experienced sannyāsīs, giving them financial support from India; but they had returned, accomplishing nothing. Perhaps these boys and girls could succeed where others had failed. Prabhupāda felt it was possible. He knew it would greatly please Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

Prabhupāda had faith that his disciples would be able to establish something in Europe, just as they had done in America. He gave the example that if someone finds a gourd lying on the road and picks it up and finds a wire and picks that up, although the two parts are in themselves useless, if he puts them together to make a vīṇā, he could play beautiful music. Similarly, Prabhupāda had come and found some hippies lying here and there, and he himself had been rejected by the people in New York City; but by Kṛṣṇa’s grace it had become a successful combination. If his disciples remained sincere and followed his orders, then they would be successful in Europe.

When the three married couples—Mukunda and Jānakī, Śyāmasundara and Mālatī, and Gurudāsa and Yamunā—arrived in Montreal, they created a new enthusiasm in the temple. These three couples had begun the temple in San Francisco and had had close association with Prabhupāda. They had helped Prabhupāda make kīrtana, feasting, and Ratha-yātrā successful among the hippies of Haight-Ashbury. Now they were eager to help Prabhupāda bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to London.

It was an emotional reunion. Jānakī began crying, and Prabhupāda patted her head, saying, “There is no need.” When Prabhupāda saw Sarasvatī, Śyāmasundara and Mālatī’s daughter, he said, “I dreamed of that child last night, that exact child.” And he took the baby in his arms and gave her his garland. Prabhupāda laughed. “They will say, ‘What kind of sannyāsī is he?’ ”

Prabhupāda wanted these three couples to stay with him for a week or two so that he could train them to perform kīrtana very expertly. Of course, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa was not a theatrical performance; it was an act of devotion. In fact, it could only be properly done by pure devotees—not by professional musicians. Yet if these disciples could learn the standard tunes and practice singing together, Londoners would better appreciate Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda wanted to teach his London-bound disciples to sing and play instruments in a specific way. Someone should learn to play the harmonium properly—following the melody, not simply pumping it, as the devotees had been doing for years. And the Sanskrit mantras and bhajanas should be pronounced properly and the melodies sung correctly. Some melodies were to be sung in the morning, others in the evening. Each word was to be pronounced correctly and with the right intonation.

Prabhupāda liked Yamunā's singing, and Mukunda was an expert musician for organizing the party. The spacious Montreal temple was a suitable place for them to practice. Ideally, Prabhupāda said, the party should have two mṛdaṅga players, one harmonium player, one tamboura player, and at least six karatāla players. He talked about sending the group not only to London but to the European continent and then to Asia also. So he wanted them to become expert at kīrtana.

"Can we put on plays and things like that?" Gurudāsa asked.

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "you can put on plays in the street with a Lord Nṛsiṃha mask and costumes and wigs. Or one boy can be dressed as Lord Caitanya, another as Lord Nityānanda, Gadādhara, Advaita with a white beard, and Śrīvāsa."

Prabhupāda became ecstatic at the thought of his disciples performing kīrtana in England. They would become more popular than the yogīs with their gymnastics and impersonal meditation. Sometimes they could dramatize scenes from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, sometimes they could recite Sanskrit verses and explain them by singing in English. Now that the London program was a tangible fact, Prabhupāda voiced one visionary plan after another. To the devotees it seemed that Prabhupāda had already thought out in detail hundreds of plans for implementing Kṛṣṇa consciousness around the world and that all he needed were some willing helpers.

Prabhupāda began holding daily kīrtana rehearsals, teaching the devotees to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, very slowly at first, gradually building the tempo. Regularly he would interrupt and have them begin again. As Yamunā led the singing, Prabhupāda would listen carefully, stopping her at times to correct her Sanskrit pronunciation.

* * *

The six London-bound devotees had arrived in Montreal only a few days before two of the biggest festival days of the year: Janmāṣṭamī, the appearance day of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Vyāsa-pūjā, the appearance day of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Now, with the festival days approaching and devotees from other cities arriving to be with Prabhupāda, the usually quiet Montreal temple began to stir with activity. Cooking became so enthusiastic that it was like a big kīrtana in the kitchen. Prabhupāda supervised the cooking of some of the preparations and then returned to his apartment, where he personally cooked several special dishes.

The Janmāṣṭamī festival was scheduled to last all day and on through the night until midnight, the time of Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance, culminating in a midnight feast. Gopal had mailed invitations to many Indians and had made hundreds of phone calls. As a result, more than three hundred guests attended. Prabhupāda spoke in the evening before a distracted, talkative audience of Indian families

with children. Afterwards he had Gaurasundara, Mukunda, and Yamunā speak in turn. Pleased by the large gathering of guests and devotees in the bowling-alley-turned-temple, Prabhupāda considered the Janmāṣṭamī festival the high point of his stay in Montreal.

After the midnight feasting, as Prabhupāda was leaving the temple, he stopped at the door and turned to Hamsadūta, who had done most of the cooking. "The sweetballs were very good," Prabhupāda said.

"Thank you, Prabhupāda."

"But mine," Prabhupāda smiled, "were better."

The next day, Prabhupāda's appearance day, the devotees gathered again, fasting until noon and then feasting. In the morning they offered little speeches in praise of their spiritual master. After most of the disciples had spoken, Prabhupāda turned to a new boy and indicated that he should speak. The boy stood and said that although he didn't know much about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he was serving Prabhupāda each day by rolling capātīs in the kitchen. He said he loved hearing Prabhupāda's taped lectures and rolling capātīs and that he was satisfied and happy and simply wanted to go on eternally rolling capātīs and hearing his spiritual master's tapes. This simple talk caused Prabhupāda to smile, and he thanked the boy for his realization.

Then Prabhupāda spoke, describing the spiritual master as a transcendental broker. The broker acts only on behalf of his firm, and the customer must deal with the firm through the broker. Approaching Kṛṣṇa through the spiritual master was like that.

* * *

The London party, now ready to go, went for a final meeting with Prabhupāda. He was sending them to start a center in London and thus fulfill his spiritual master's dream. The sannyāsī Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had sent to London had lectured in a few places, posed for photos with lords and ladies, and then returned to India. But Prabhupāda said his disciples should boldly go out and chant the holy name and attract others to chant. Then, when those persons were practiced at chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, they could continue on their own, and the devotees could move on to another place and chant. Prabhupāda was enthusiastic about London, and as he spoke he filled his disciples with the same enthusiasm.

When Mukunda asked Prabhupāda if he had any specific instructions, he replied with a story. In his youth, Prabhupāda said, he had seen a movie of Charlie Chaplin. The setting was a formal ball held outdoors, and off from the main dance arena were lanes with benches where couples sat. Some mischievous boys plastered glue on a bench, and a young man and his girl friend came and sat down. "When the young man got up"—Prabhupāda laughed as he told the story, and his disciples, who could hardly believe their ears, were also laughing—"his tailing coats tore up the middle."

The man and woman didn't notice what had happened and returned to the dance, where they began to draw stares from the other dancers. Wondering why he was suddenly drawing so much attention, the young man went into the dressing room and saw in the mirror that his coattails were

torn. Deliberately, he then tore his jacket all the way up to the collar, returned to his partner, and began dancing exuberantly.

Then another man decided to get into the spirit and, ripping his own coattails, began dancing with his partner almost in competition with the first couple. One by one, the other dancers all followed suit, ripping their coattails and dancing with abandon.

By the time Prabhupāda finished the story, the devotees in his room were all laughing, forgetting everything else. Then, as the laughter subsided and the meeting drew to an end, Mālatī asked, "Prabhupāda, I don't think we can go to London unless we have the shelter of your lotus feet. May we kiss your lotus feet?"

The other devotees were taken aback at her sudden request. No one had ever done such a thing before. But neither her husband nor the others said anything to oppose her, and Prabhupāda consented. One by one, the six London-bound preachers came and offered their obeisances, kissing the bottom of their spiritual master's feet.

Not until the devotees were already at the airport did Mukunda, talking with Śyāmasundara, begin to appreciate and marvel that Prabhupāda had expertly answered his question by telling the story of the ripped coattails.

Mukunda: I realized that Prabhupāda was telling us that preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be difficult or unpopular in England at first. But if we preached boldly, enthusiastically, and purely, then everyone would follow.

SPL 60: Seattle

CHAPTER SIXTY

Seattle

= September 21, 1968

The immediate reason Śrīla Prabhupāda went to Seattle was that two of his disciples, Upendra and Gargamuni, had just begun an ISKCON center there and had invited him. For several years, this had been Prabhupāda's method of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in America: he went to a city, stayed, preached, and directed his disciples. He had done so in New York, San Francisco, Boston, Montreal, Los Angeles—all with good success. As he had written in a letter of March 1968, "We want to open hundreds of centers so that people may take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And we need many enthusiastic boys and girls for carrying on this great mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu."

Prabhupāda's Guru Mahārāja, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, had not mentioned Seattle or even the United States when he ordered Prabhupāda to preach in the Western countries. But Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu had said the chanting of the Lord's holy names, Hare Kṛṣṇa, would go to every town and village of the world. The street chanters and Back to Godhead magazine distributors in Los Angeles and San Francisco wanted to try Seattle to test the chanting in the streets of a conServative

city. Seattle, the home of Boeing Aircraft Manufacturers, had a population of 560,000, a university, and several good colleges. On Prabhupāda's order, the devotees went ahead to join the Seattle temple in time for Prabhupāda's arrival.

While Gargamuni was still desperately trying to find an apartment he could afford, the devotees received Prabhupāda in a hotel room. From Prabhupāda's room, the window looked out at the six-hundred-foot-tall Space Needle and the monorail—leftovers from the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. The devotees squeezed into the small room as Prabhupāda sat behind a low desk and pulled his harmonium to him. "Should I play?" he asked, smiling. They pleaded, "Yes!" and he began playing, the fingers of his right hand moving deftly across the keyboard, while his left hand pumped the harmonium's bellows. He sang, *gaurāṅga balite habe pulaka śarīra/ hari hari balite nayane vabe nīra*. Their meeting with him in the room was happy, but the song was not a light thing. The sound poured forth, both from him and from the little harmonium. They were bhajanas, he had explained to them, songs of devotion, this one by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura: "When will the time come when, while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, there will be tears in the eyes?" He played, and the expression of his face in singing seemed like crying. The song, he said, meant, "When the mind is completely purified, freed from material anxieties and desires, then I shall be able to understand Vṛndāvana and the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa; and then my spiritual life will be successful."

The first night in town, Prabhupāda was to drive from the hotel to the ISKCON temple, a house rented by the devotees in a quiet suburban neighborhood. A devotee-carpenter, Nara-nārāyaṇa, had done excellent work with \$50 converting the living room into a temple room. Enclosed behind long red satin curtains was an impressive three-tiered altar. The altar was paneled with the same cedar as the walls. The altar's bottom shelf had a brass incense holder, brass flower vases, two silver double candle holders, a conchshell, and a picture of Lord Viṣṇu. On the middle shelf were a black-and-white close-up of Prabhupāda, a large color poster of Lord Caitanya, and a simple ink drawing of the Pañca-tattva by Prabhupāda's disciples Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī. The top shelf held the twelve-inch deities of Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā and Lord Baladeva, who were clothed in simple golden satin, without jewels or garlands.

Around the room were nicely framed pictures. To the left of the altar was an Indian print of Gopāla with His arm around a calf. Forming a border near the ceiling were several of Gurudāsa's captivating black-and-white close-ups of Śrīla Prabhupāda on morning walks in San Francisco. On the left wall was a painting of Kṛṣṇa driving Arjuna's chariot. To the right of the altar was Śrīla Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana.

The room was small. The devotees had designed a vyāsāsana, three feet high, wedged into the corner so that the room could accommodate many people. The back of the seat was cushioned with deep blue velvet inset with large and decorative golden upholstery buttons. The seat itself was gold velvet, with a gold bolster pillow. A small gold velvet canopy with a fringe hung above the vyāsāsana.

Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived at the temple accompanied by his servant, Kartikeya, and his secretary, Govinda dāsī. Coming up the steps onto the porch, they were greeted at the front door by the welcoming kīrtana of the devotees in the small temple room. As Śrīla Prabhupāda made his way from the door toward his vyāsāsana, all the devotees in the room, except for one, bowed down. The

exception, standing midway between the front door and the vyāsāsana, was a newcomer, a girl named Joy Fulcher, who had only met the devotees that very day. And as Śrīla Prabhupāda passed by her, she also bowed down.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda was taking his seat on the vyāsāsana, while Kartikeya adjusted the microphone and Govinda dāsī adjusted the tape recorder, the devotees sent Joy forward to offer Prabhupāda a garland of red roses and red carnations. Joy had made the garland, stringing the flowers in a symmetrical pattern. But when she placed it around Prabhupāda's neck, the garland fell asymmetrically. Feeling undone, she turned to go sit down. "Thank you very much," said Prabhupāda in a soft but deeply resounding voice.

Joy Fulcher: So I sat down and listened to his lecture. But I could not understand his accent. I was struck with the impression that here was a very elderly person who had taken great difficulty to come and speak to us. I could understand there was nothing motivating in it for him. I felt very much that he didn't want to cheat me. I also had the conception that this person was inconceivably humble, because of his quoting the scriptures, because of his references to his Guru Mahārāja, and because of his general attitude and his soft-spoken voice. I could understand that he was not trying to impress anyone and that he was very humble and dependent on his Guru Mahārāja.

After the lecture, I raised my hand to ask a question. Answering three or four questions first, he finally took my question. I asked him, "Śrī Bhaktivedanta, how is it that this universal presence which is humanly inconceivable, at least to me, at this time..., how can it have the form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa?" The devotees had preached to me, prior to his arrival, that the Absolute Truth, which I, from my reading in yoga philosophy, impersonally called "universal presence," was actually Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and His consort, Rādhārāṇī.

Śrīla Prabhupāda very distinctly answered, "By His mercy." But then he spoke loudly, "You cannot make the sun rise, and similarly you cannot make God appear before you to answer your doubts!"

I was thunderstruck that he chose this particular example, since only four months earlier I had climbed a mountain by myself and sat there all night waiting for dawn, when I would "make the sun rise." But when dawn came, it was a cloudy day, and so, of course, I did not make the sun rise. The fact that out of all examples Prabhupāda chose that particular thing to answer me hit me like a thunderbolt.

Then His Divine Grace softened his voice, like a rose, and indicating his disciples with a wave of his arm, he said, "But you just associate with these nice boys and girls here, chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, eat kṛṣṇa-prasādam, study my books scrutinizingly, and engage yourself in a little service, and then the Lord will reveal Himself to you from within your heart, in His own time, by His own sweet will, with all His name, fame, form, pastimes, paraphernalia, and entourage."

Within a few days, Gargamuni found an inexpensive two-room apartment for Prabhupāda. Gargamuni, who was accustomed to the Lower East Side of New York City, thought this Seattle apartment a good bargain. By New York slum standards it wasn't bad, but there were much better places in Seattle.

When Prabhupāda entered with the devotees, it became obvious to everyone that the apartment was a disaster. Prabhupāda went to the windows and looked out—at the brick wall of the building six feet away. Because of this building, no sunlight could enter the room. Prabhupāda looked below at the dark, dingy alley littered with garbage. The curtains in the room reached only half way down the wall, the tiles were peeling in the bathroom, nothing was clean, and there was no bed. Anyone staying with Prabhupāda would have to walk through his room to reach the bathroom. Only when Prabhupāda entered, with his bright, transcendental presence, could his disciples fully understand that the apartment was not at all suitable. Prabhupāda, however, didn't complain. "It doesn't matter," he said. And taking his cādar and placing it on the floor, he sat down.

Although the neighborhood was noisy, Prabhupāda was tolerant. But he admitted, "This place is not nice." And then, looking up at the devotees in the dingy room, he asked, "Why have you put me in this dungeon?" Struck at heart by these words, the devotees knew they had to find a better place, and several of them went out to search.

Why had they put him in a dungeon? Jayānanda, Nara-nārāyaṇa, and Govinda dāsī got into the van and drove off, vowing not to return until they found a place Prabhupāda would like. They moved toward the Capitol Hill area and finally found a "For Rent" sign on the lawn of a nice house situated near a lake. Although it was a basement apartment, the many ground-level windows made the rooms bright and sunny. Jayānanda and Govinda dāsī talked to the landlord, and Prabhupāda moved in the next day.

He liked the tulips lining his windows and the view down the sloping green lawn to the shore of the lake. He liked walking in the backyard, from where he could see boats passing. "That other place," he chuckled, "was like being in the womb of the mother, and this place is like coming out into the world and seeing the light." The apartment was well furnished, and Prabhupāda put his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on a dresser before the mirror, which made a nice backdrop.

Early every morning Prabhupāda would go on a walk, usually to Volunteer Park, where he walked by the reservoir. The path around the reservoir's perimeter was several miles long, and although some of the young men would become exhausted from the walk, Prabhupāda enjoyed it. One morning, while Jayānanda was walking with Prabhupāda, they approached a man who had just pulled a fish out of the water. The fisherman held up his catch, dangling it as if offering it to Prabhupāda. "Anyone for a fish dinner?" the man asked cheerily. Prabhupāda smiled, "No, you enjoy." Prabhupāda kept walking until he was past the man and then added, "And suffer."

They also walked in an area filled with many rose bushes and many birds. Peacocks roamed freely. It is written in the śāstras that wherever a saintly person goes becomes a tīrtha, or a place of pilgrimage. In India are many tīrthas, most of which are places where the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His great devotees enacted some līlā. There are no such tīrthas, however, in America. But after Prabhupāda's preaching—beginning in New York City in place like 26 Second Avenue and Tompkins Square Park, and later in Golden Gate Park, at Stowe Lake, Venice Beach, or Volunteer Park—then even these American places became, for Prabhupāda's followers, significant, never-to-be-forgotten sites.

Prabhupāda took advantage of the presence of the traveling saṅkīrtana party in Seattle. He told Tamāla Kṛṣṇa he wanted to organize a world saṅkīrtana party, with twelve men, twelve women, and himself going all over the world. But for the present, the devotees went out daily in the downtown city. In Seattle, citizens were astounded to see young Americans with shaven heads, saffron robes, women in sārīs, playing cymbals and singing “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare.” The devotees would chant Hare Kṛṣṇa for hours, give out cards with the mahā-mantra printed on them, and sometimes bring people back to the temple. As a result, attendance was good at Prabhupāda's evening lectures. With the devotees chanting on the streets during the day and Prabhupāda speaking at night, the city was quickly becoming spiritualized. Therefore, each evening the small cedarwood-paneled temple room of Lord Jagannātha was filled with considerable transcendental excitement. For Prabhupāda, it was very encouraging to lecture to a hall crowded with both disciples and guests.

After the evening kīrtana, everyone would sit down on the floor, and some people would even stand outside the house, looking in and listening at the windows. Prabhupāda invariably began by chanting, in a strong, simple melody, the refrain govindam adi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi. And everyone would repeat in chorus, govindam adi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi. He would chant it half a dozen times and then begin his lecture.

Prabhupāda's Teachings of Lord Caitanya had recently been published, and he often lectured by having a devotee read out loud. Prabhupāda would listen, and whenever he felt moved to, he would interrupt and begin speaking. “This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement,” Prabhupāda explained, “has to be understood through the teachings of Lord Caitanya. He appeared in Bengal, a province in India, five hundred years ago. And He specifically preached the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. To execute that order we have come to your country. My request is that you try to understand this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement with all your knowledge, scrutinizingly. Don't accept it blindly. We have this book Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and other books also, many books. So try to read them. And we have our magazine Back to Godhead. We are not sentimentalists that we are simply dancing. Dancing has got great value. That, if you dance with us, you will feel. It is not that some crazy fellows are dancing. The most intelligent persons are dancing, and yet it is so nicely made that even a boy like here, he is a boy, he can take part.”

Prabhupāda emphasized that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was universal. It was full of sound philosophy, and yet it was very simple. The simple message was, “God is great, and we are His part and parcel.” And to prove it, he gave simple examples: The hand is part of the body and has great value when working as part of the whole. A small screw in the typewriting machine is very valuable as long as it is working as part of the machine; otherwise it is useless. Similarly, unless the individual spirit soul engages in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, he is incomplete.

Prabhupāda spoke some basic Kṛṣṇa consciousness for about a half-hour and then asked for questions. Always at least a few hands raised. He recognized the outsiders first. It was not unusual in those days to find young people, college students and hippies, asking cosmic questions, dabbling in yoga and Eastern philosophy. Often, however, they had many different things on their minds, including drugs, and were frequently confused. But Prabhupāda, experienced with over three years of constant preaching to young Americans, had already heard almost anything they could possibly ask.

Young man: "Is there a communication that is not the word itself but beyond words, perhaps a vibration reaching for the om? I mean, does one attain a communication, something understood between you and myself and my brother, an experience like the sound dong or aung? Is there something else beyond the verbal?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied, "this Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Man: "Hare Kṛṣṇa?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes."

Man: "But can you tell me how this can be? How to talk that language all the time rather than English or other languages?"

Prabhupāda: "It doesn't matter that Hare Kṛṣṇa can be sounded in Sanskrit only. You can sound it in English tone also, Hare Kṛṣṇa. Is there any difficulty? These boys are also sounding Hare Kṛṣṇa. Just like the piano. If you touch, there is sound. It doesn't matter whether an American is striking or an Indian striking or a Hindu striking or a Muslim striking, the sound is sound. Similarly, this piano, Hare Kṛṣṇa, you just touch it and it will sound. That's all."

Someone asked about meditation.

Prabhupāda asked, "What do you mean by meditation?"

"Sitting alone quietly."

"How is it possible?" Prabhupāda asked. "Is there any experience that the mind is not acting when you sit silently? You have to engage your mind in something."

"What do you engage it in?"

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "That is Kṛṣṇa. We engage our mind in Kṛṣṇa, the beautiful Supreme Personality of Godhead. Not only simply engaging the mind, but engaging the mind in action with the senses. Because mind is acting with our senses. Your mind said, 'Let us go to that newly started ISKCON society.' So your legs carried you here. So mind—thinking, feeling, willing—these are the functions of the mind. You have to fix up your mind not only thinking of Kṛṣṇa, but also working for Kṛṣṇa, feeling for Kṛṣṇa. That is complete meditation."

Someone asked if a Christian, by reading the Bible and following Jesus's words, required a spiritual master. As soon as you read the Bible, Prabhupāda replied, that means you are following the instructions of Lord Jesus Christ, so where is the opportunity of being without a spiritual master?

"I was referring to a living spiritual master."

Prabhupāda: “You may accept this spiritual master or that spiritual master. That is a different thing. But you have to accept. When you read the Bible, that means you are following the spiritual master represented by some priest or clergyman in the line of Lord Jesus Christ. So, in any case, you have to follow a spiritual master. There is no question of being without a spiritual master. Is that clear?”

“Many different sects of Christianity interpret the Bible in different ways.”

Prabhupāda: “There cannot be any interpretation in the Bible; then there is no authority. Just like this is a watch. Everyone has called it a watch, and if I call it a spectacle, then what is the value of my being spiritual master? I'm misleading. It is a watch, and that I must say. This intelligence you must have—who is a pseudo spiritual master and a real spiritual master. Otherwise, you'll be cheated, and that is being done. Everyone is interpreting in his own way.

“There are thousands of editions of the Bhagavad-gītā, and they have tried to interpret it in their own way—all nonsense. They should all be thrown away. Simply you have to read the Bhagavad-gītā as it is, then you'll understand. If anyone can understand the clear passage, just like the Bible, “God said, “Let there be creation," and there was creation.' What is the question of interpretation? Yes, God created. You cannot create. Where is opportunity of interpretation?

“Am I right, in the beginning of the Bible it is said like that: “God said, “Let there be creation," and there was creation.' So what is your interpretation? Tell me what is your interpretation. Can any one of you suggest? One can explain; that is a different thing. But the fact that God created, that will remain; that we cannot change.

“Now how the creative process took place, that is explained in the Bhāgavatam. First of all there was sky, then there was sound, then there was this, that. But the primary fact that God created, that will remain in any circumstance. Not the rascal scientist who says, “Oh, there was a chunk, and it split up, and there was this planet. Perhaps this and likely this,' all this nonsense. Why “perhaps'? Here is clear statement: God created. That's all. Finished.”

Another guest said he didn't feel subordinate to anyone, therefore he didn't feel he had to bow down to anyone. Indirectly, he was criticizing the devotees' offering of obeisances to Prabhupāda. It is a material disease, Prabhupāda replied, to think that we don't have to bow down. He demonstrated logically that nature forces each of us to be subordinate, “to bow down” to old age, disease, death, and many other things.

Guest: “O.K. But who or what should I bow down to?”

Prabhupāda: “Since you are being forced to bow down, now you have to find where you shall be happy even by bowing down. And that is Kṛṣṇa. Your bowing down will not be stopped, because you are meant for that; but if you bow down to Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's representative, then you become happy.”

The disciples were submissive, and therefore only to them could the spiritual master impart knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But some of them were also doubtful, and Prabhupāda had to convince them with the same logical arguments he used with the outsiders.

Devotee: "Prabhupāda? How do you logically explain to impersonalists the existence of the Personality of Godhead?"

Prabhupāda began to explain the three features of the Absolute and compared them to the three features of the sun, namely the sunshine, the sun disk, and the sun-god. Using the well-known example, he thoroughly explained the existence of the Supreme Person as the source of all expansions, including the impersonal Brahman.

"But [the devotee was not yet satisfied] how does one explain to such an impersonalist the Absolute Truth logically. I was told Śrīla Bhaktivinoda had such a proof."

Prabhupāda: "Apart from Bhaktivinoda, try to understand in your common sense." Painstakingly, Prabhupāda explained again, this time at greater length. He quoted the Vedānta-sūtra verse *janmādyasya yataḥ*, explaining how everything in existence comes from the Supreme Absolute. Therefore, as we are persons, there must be a Supreme Person, the reservoir of all personality, from whom everything comes. As we experience that our father is a person, therefore we are persons.

Often Prabhupāda was simply saying there is God and one should love God. But one student protested why love of God should come in the form of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Student: "If our first concern should be to serve God, or Kṛṣṇa, then why should there be a movement? You might get so caught up in the movement that you're forgetting about serving God."

Prabhupāda: "Why am I serving God? This movement means I am serving God. What do you mean by 'serving'? If Kṛṣṇa says, 'You obey Me,' and if I say, 'You obey Kṛṣṇa,' is this not service?"

Student: "Yes."

Prabhupāda: "So we are doing the same business. Kṛṣṇa says, 'Surrender to Me and give up all other engagement, and I shall give you protection.' And we are saying the same thing, that you surrender to Kṛṣṇa and you'll be happy. So we are voluntarily giving service to Kṛṣṇa. Preaching work is the best service, if you preach rightly. If you preach wrongly, that is disservice. You have to simply say the same thing as Kṛṣṇa."

Student: "But the movement might get in the way of serving Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda: "It is service to Kṛṣṇa. Because we have understood what Kṛṣṇa wants, we are preaching the same thing."

Student: "Was there always a kind of movement?"

Prabhupāda: "Yes, the movement is always there. Just like in the Bhagavad-gītā it is said, 'My dear Arjuna, whenever people are misguided and there is too much irreligiosity, at that time I appear Myself.' The material world is such that, if something is set right, still some time it will be distorted. Therefore a movement is required whenever there is deterioration of the real truth. But it is the

same movement, not a new movement. The movement means God is there, He is great, and we are all subordinate. Our duty is to abide by the order of God, then we are happy. The movement is simple. The same movement was preached by Lord Kṛṣṇa. The same movement was preached by Lord Jesus Christ. The same movement we are also preaching. Simply accepting the authority or the greatness of the Supreme Lord and engaging oneself, that's all. There is nothing new. Don't try to see something new. It is the oldest because God is the oldest, you are also the oldest, and your relationship is also the oldest. Therefore the movement is also the oldest. But the process adopted is suitable for this time. That is also not new, not manufactured. It is recommended for this age. Just like during the winter season, the process is to protect your body from being affected by cold. Similarly in this age, Kali-yuga, it is recommended that God realization is only possible by this chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Many of the youngsters would try to catch Prabhupāda in contradictions. One boy noted Prabhupāda's statement that it was natural for a child to drink milk and not eat the meat of an animal. The boy argued that if Prabhupāda's emphasis was on being natural, then is it natural for a child to grow up, shave his head, and serve God, or was that just another form of socialization? Another challenger asked why the International Society for Krishna Consciousness was "incorporated." Another asked if the sādhus in India who wore long hair and wandered in the woods needed spiritual masters.

The questions revealed the guests' uneasiness. Prabhupāda was demanding a full commitment to the truth. They could understand that if they accepted that he was presenting the truth, then they, too, like the bright-faced disciples sitting beside them in the crowded temple room, should bow down to Prabhupāda and Lord Jagannātha, join "the movement," shave their heads, and go out chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. At least that was the implication. So those who deeply wanted to avoid the austerity, the surrender, the uprooting of a whole lifetime of illusion, sought out the flaws, the possible contradictions. But kind and lenient though he was, Prabhupāda—never demanding that they shave their heads or live in the temple—continued to defeat their doubting arguments, expose the weakness of their atheistic reasoning, and smash the folly of their material desires. He ruled forth as Kṛṣṇa's representative, speaking from the blue and gold velvet vyāsāsana in the front room of the Seattle house.

Woman: "I wish to see proofs of afterlife, in writing, so that I can read it and study it and examine it carefully. Is it available in writing?"

Prabhupāda: "Read Bhagavad-gītā. You'll understand everything."

Woman: "That's sixty-eight volumes?"

Prabhupāda: "No, Bhagavad-gītā is one volume only. Eighteen chapters, seven hundred verses. You can read it in three days. It is not very difficult. We have published Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, and I think if you read it, you will get so many nice informations. After reading Bhagavad-gītā, you read Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Then you get further enlightenment. Then you read Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and you get further enlightenment. And for general information, we have this Back to Godhead you can read. It is not that simply we are talking. We are backed by sufficient knowledge and literature."

And so it went into the evening, nine o'clock turned to ten o'clock and ten o'clock to ten-thirty.

Is bhakti-yoga for everyone? What about kuṇḍalini-yoga? Why did Kṛṣṇa ask Arjuna to fight? What about Christ consciousness? What about the Trinity? Prabhupāda was completely absorbed in defeating arguments and answering questions about Kṛṣṇa—a samādhi of debate on behalf of his Lord Kṛṣṇa. Yes, he did expect them, if they were gentlemen, to accept his presentation as correct and to make a real commitment to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "So here is the offering," Prabhupāda said. "Take Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now it is your choice. If you can take it, it is good. If you don't take it, that is your misfortune. Is there any difficulty to accept our formula? I ask all of you, is there any difficulty? I am asking this. You have asked so many questions of me. Is there any difficulty to accept this formula?"

The assembled guests and devotees murmured in reply, "No."

"So why don't you take it?" Prabhupāda laughed. "It is so simple, nice. Try to understand by your knowledge. We are not pushing forcibly. You have got your intelligence, argument, logic, everything. But you'll find it sublime. The author of Caitanya-caritāmṛta says that we are placing it for your judgment, not that we are pushing it by force. Sometimes it is said that the Mohammedans propagated their religion by holding a sword in one hand and the Koran in another hand: Either you accept Koran, or there is sword for you. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not like that. It is placed for your judgment. And if you like, you can accept. Otherwise, I came here empty-handed, I shall go back empty-handed. There is no loss, no gain."

Prabhupāda laughed with the satisfaction of the completely surrendered servant. Then he asked them all to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: At that point, I could recognize that Prabhupāda was my complete lord and master. Whenever he would get up from the vyāsāsana I would just grip his feet and hold them and hold them. I would hold his feet at my head, and I wouldn't let him walk at all. I was so eager to be at Prabhupāda's lotus feet. I wanted to be with him as much as I could. I would feel very torn apart when he would go to another temple. I remember sometimes after the program, he would finish eating a piece of fruit and would throw the peel on the floor. We would all jump for it and fight with each other in front of the altar and Prabhupāda. We would be scrapping around like little puppies. Prabhupāda would lean back and laugh. He thought we were making very nice advancement by this.

Word got around that Prabhupāda—whose disciples were chanting downtown every day—was himself chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and speaking in the temple on Roosevelt Way. A local TV station came out one evening to film the proceedings, bringing big cameras, microphones, and bright lights into the temple room and shooting Lord Jagannātha, the devotees dancing and singing, and excerpts of Prabhupāda speaking. The following day they returned to Prabhupāda's apartment and filmed him playing harmonium and speaking with a woman interviewer. They turned their cameras on his personal altar, with close-ups of his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities as well as the covers of his books, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is and Teachings of Lord Caitanya. When Prabhupāda saw the footage on color TV—a few minutes of the evening news—he thought it was good. He wrote to the devotees in

London, "This newscast should help our movement here in Seattle, as so many people will see, and come to our temple. You can try for television appearances there also if possible."

After the TV showing, there was a brief fame. When Prabhupāda came to the lecture the next night, the temple room was filled with about fifty extra guests, young men and women. Prabhupāda seemed pleased, but actually they were all one group, a fun-seeking fraternity house with their dates. They managed to stay through the kīrtana, but as soon as Prabhupāda began to speak, they all got up and left, leaving the devotees and the usual number of about a dozen interested guests.

The devotees were also going to the university, and among the students was considerable interest, at least casually. A representative of a student newspaper came and talked at length with Prabhupāda.

When two men came to Prabhupāda's apartment and presented themselves as reporters, Prabhupāda's secretary allowed them in, thinking they also wanted an interview. But their interview became an interrogation. They challenged Prabhupāda as to why he was not teaching that Jesus Christ was the only way to God. They were angry that Prabhupāda was preaching on the campuses. When Prabhupāda informed them that he accepted Jesus Christ as the son of God, they demanded, "But do you believe or not that Jesus is the only way?"

Prabhupāda replied, "Do you believe that God is limited or unlimited?"

"Unlimited," they admitted.

"Then why are you limiting Him," said Prabhupāda, "by saying that there is only one way to get to Him? Even an ordinary man can have twenty sons. Do you mean to say that God can have only one son? Why are you limiting Him?"

Within a few minutes, the men were speaking to Prabhupāda in loud voices. It became obvious they were not reporters, and they told him they were, in fact, local ministers. When they became blasphemous, the devotees asked them to leave the house. Prabhupāda wrote in a letter to a disciple in New York,

The priestly class of Christian and Jewish churches are becoming envious of our movement. Because they are afraid of their own system of religiosity, because they see so many young boys and girls are taking interest in this system of Krishna consciousness. Naturally, they are not very satisfied. So we may be facing some difficulty by them in the future. So, we have to take some precaution. Of course, this priestly class could not do anything very nice till now, but the dogmatic way of thinking is going on. So anyway we shall have to depend on Krishna.

Before Prabhupāda's arrival in Seattle, Upendra had written the head of the Asian department at the University of Washington, requesting a speaking engagement. The professor wrote back entirely in Sanskrit, knowing well that the boys would not be able to read his letter. Upendra gave the letter to Prabhupāda, who immediately translated it and answered the professor with a letter written in English, but quoting many Sanskrit verses. Prabhupāda concluded his letter, "I am sorry that we

cannot reply in Sanskrit. Our process is not academic, but purely spiritual." Prabhupāda had Upendra sign the letter as if he had written it himself.

Prabhupāda went out himself to speak in several colleges. At the University of Washington, he had Tamāla Kṛṣṇa give an introductory talk. Speaking directly what he had heard from Prabhupāda, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa spoke boldly about "so-called holy men or swamis who are cheating the public." He took considerable care to demonstrate that "our spiritual master" is in complete agreement with Lord Jesus and the Bible. The Bible is bona fide, he said, but like a pocket dictionary compared to the unabridged.

"There is a need to hear a person like our spiritual master, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, speak," said Tamāla Kṛṣṇa. He then read an article from the New York Daily News, headlined "Retreat for Priests Who Drink," featuring a sanatorium that had been opened for some of the five thousand alcoholic priests in the United States. "I'm not saying that all priests are like this," he said. "That's not at all what I'm trying to get at. But the article goes on to say that alcoholism is not treated as a moral failure, but as a disease. But that's absurd. It is a moral failure. These priests have the choice to drink or not to drink. They chose to drink and get drunk. These are men who are leading us back to God.

"The point is, you must have someone who is pure. To teach about God requires a moral qualification. Our spiritual master spends a hundred percent of his time in praise of the Supreme Lord. We ask you today, please listen closely and just try to understand his teachings. Just listen and test with your reasoning ability and your intellect to see whether this is not the bona fide way to the Absolute Truth. Now let His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda speak."

Prabhupāda listened from the orange cloth-covered dais where he sat in the auditorium. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa had stood and spoken, and now he joined the other saffron-robed men and the women in sārīs who sat at Prabhupāda's feet. His voice echoing with amplification in the large hall, Prabhupāda spoke to an audience of over a hundred. He quoted the verse om ajñāna-timirāndhasya, explaining that everyone in the material world is in darkness, and the spiritual master is he who opens our eyes with the torch of knowledge. If human society does not have the urge to come to the light by searching after God, then mankind is no better than the animals.

To illustrate the point that human society is in a precarious condition for lack of God consciousness, Prabhupāda told "a very nice story."

"One rat," he said, "was troubled with a cat, so he came to a saintly person.

"“My dear sir, I am very much troubled."

"“What is the difficulty?"

"The rat said, "The cat always chases, so I am not in peace of mind."

"“Then what do you want?"

““Please make me a cat.’

““All right, you become a cat.’ But after a few days, the cat returned to the saintly person and complained that he was being chased by the dogs. The saintly person gave him the benediction, “All right, become a dog.’ Then the foxes chased the dog. The saintly person blessed him again, “All right, become a fox.’ Then the tigers chased him. The saintly person turned him into a tiger.

“And when he became a tiger,” Prabhupāda continued, “he began to stare his eyes on the saintly person, “I shall eat you.’

““Oh! You shall eat me? I have made you tiger, and you want to eat me?’

““Yes, I am a tiger and I shall eat you.’

““Oh,’ then the saintly person cursed him, “again you become a rat. Again you become a rat.’ So he became a rat.

“So our human civilization is going to be like that. The other day I was reading in your world almanac. In the next hundred years, people will live underground like rats. So our scientific advancement has created this atomic bomb to kill man, and it will be used. And we have to go underground to become again rat. From tiger again rat. That is going to be. That is nature's law: *daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā*. If you defy the laws of your state, then you are put into difficulty. Similarly, if you continue to defy the authority, the supremacy of the Supreme Lord, Personality of Godhead, then the same result—again you become rat. As soon as there is atomic bomb, everything, all civilization on the surface of the globe, will be finished. So people may not like it. It may be very unpalatable, but the fact is like that.”

Prabhupāda explained that the God consciousness he was advocating was not a particular rigid religion like Christian or Hindu or Muslim, but it was universal. He explained the word dharma as one's characteristic, that which cannot be taken away. The unalterable characteristic of the living entity, he said, is the tendency to love and do service, and that is our eternal religion.

“So I do not wish to take much of your time,” Prabhupāda concluded after no more than ten minutes, “but simply I want to impress upon you that this chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is so nice that if you give an experimental way, you can see. You chant for at least one week, and you see how much you have changed. So these boys, they are chanting in the street. We have got many branches in your country, one in London, one in Germany, and everyone is taking part. It is increasing. So we don't charge anything, neither you have got any loss. If there is any profit, you can try it, but there is not loss. That is guaranteed. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Thank you very much.”

During his stay in Seattle, a few people came to join his disciples, living with them and aspiring to become devotees. After several weeks, Prabhupāda held an initiation for students who had already been with ISKCON for about six months. Prabhupāda held the traditional initiation ceremony with mantras and fire yajña in the temple room. He had just completed the last mantras, had turned to

the devotees, and said, "Now chant Hare Kṛṣṇa," when a guest, a woman who had some local fame as a haṭha-yoga instructor, interrupted the proceedings.

"Excuse me," she began, "I have to speak to you."

"Please wait," said Prabhupāda.

"Why are you sitting on a raised seat?" she exclaimed. "You are sitting up there, and all these people are sitting here, and you're like you're on a throne." Devotees tried politely to check her, but she wanted to be heard. Prabhupāda was silent.

"Why does everyone bow to you?" she demanded. "Don't you know God is everywhere? Everyone is God."

"That's all right," said Prabhupāda. "Let us chant." Her argument was drowned out by a rousing kīrtana celebrating the completion of the initiation ceremony. When the kīrtana ended, Prabhupāda was still thinking of the disruptive guest.

Prabhupāda: "Where is that girl? She is gone?"

Viṣṇujana: "I think Madhudviṣa explained to her. She didn't know about the bowing down and everything."

Prabhupāda: "What was her question?"

Viṣṇujana: "She was thinking that we were bowing to you as if you were God. She resents this because in the Christian religion it says, 'Bow down to no man.'"

"What did you explain?" Prabhupāda laughed. "Did you not explain that we are bowing down not as God but as God's representative? Could you not explain like this?"

"She's over there, I think," said Madhudviṣa, "if you'd like to talk to her." But the yoginī had left the room and was now out front talking with the new girl, Joy, who had been living with Prabhupāda's disciples since his first night in Seattle. The yoginī was trying to revive Joy's old interest in impersonal yoga and was criticizing Prabhupāda. Although Joy had cried when Prabhupāda was blasphemed, she became confused hearing the yoginī speak impersonal, antidevotional philosophy.

Then as Prabhupāda was leaving the temple to get into his car, the yoginī obstructed his path and continued her blasphemy.

"No one should bow down," she railed, "because everyone is God."

Prabhupāda became angry, a fiery look in his wide eyes. Suddenly Joy Fulcher came forward and threw herself on the ground before Prabhupāda, placing her hand on his foot. She had been confused about whom to accept, but now felt compelled to surrender to Prabhupāda. He allowed

her to keep her hand on his foot while the yoginī gradually subsided before Prabhupāda's angry silence and let him pass. Getting into the van, Prabhupāda bumped his head on the inside of the roof. The devotees were furious and blamed the blasphemous girl for what happened. As the van drove away, Prabhupāda turned to Nara-Nārāyaṇa, who was driving. "That girl said everyone is God. But she objected that they were bowing down to me. But if everyone is God, am I not also God?"

The devotees in Seattle were trying to save Joy, who had become confused by the visit of the yoginī. The next day they arranged that she should go see Prabhupāda on the plea that she was an artist and could perhaps do some devotional paintings. Prabhupāda agreed, and she waited outside his room while he gave Jīvānanda a drum lesson. Finally, she entered Prabhupāda's room.

Jāhnava dāsī (Joy Fulcher): Prabhupāda asked, "What kind of girl is it who sees every man as God?" He was referring to the troublesome girl who had blasphemed at the initiation. I didn't understand him, so he repeated the question, then a third time, and added, "She's a prostitute, isn't she?!" Fortunately, Govinda dāsī walked in at that moment and was able to tell me later what his question had been. At the time, all I knew was that I accepted His Divine Grace as spiritual master and that the answer to his question (no matter what it was) was "Yes." So I answered, "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda." And he was pleased. Then he warned, "Don't associate with nondevotees."

I wanted him to know that I accepted him without doubt as my spiritual master. Very sentimentally, I said, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have always had trouble with my material father and mother, but now I can understand that you are my real father." His Divine Grace mercifully matched my tone and gently said, "Everyone has a material father and mother, but you have a spiritual father. You are very fortunate."

I was crazy and had trouble seeing him because he appeared very effulgent, so I was wiping my eyes with my hands. Also I couldn't understand his accent, so I kept wiping my ears with my hands. His Divine Grace took compassion on my struggle to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. He then penetrated my impersonalism with a beautiful description of Lord Kṛṣṇa's form. As I sat facing him, he was looking past me, over my shoulder. His Divine Grace said, "Just see how beautifully Lord Kṛṣṇa's hair is resting on His shoulders. Just see how His eyes are beautiful, like two lotus petals. Just see how nicely Lord Kṛṣṇa has wrapped His shawl about His thighs. Just see how nicely He has put on His dhotī." He also mentioned the Lord's lotus feet. I don't know whether he was looking at a Deity or a picture of Kṛṣṇa or whether Lord Kṛṣṇa was standing there, as he looked up and down, describing His form. All I knew was that if I turned around I would see a painting or brass or air. So I decided just to look at His Divine Grace and hear him describe Lord Kṛṣṇa as he saw Him.

After I left the room, Govinda dāsī asked what His Divine Grace had said about painting. She couldn't believe it when I told her we didn't discuss painting for the whole hour. (Knowing that the spiritual master knows everything, I had waited for him to bring up the subject and give me that service.) She brought me back and explained to him the purpose for which I had come. He asked my artistic background and was unimpressed when I rattled it off, because I was proud. Then he ordered me to paint the Pañca-tattva.

Not only new recruits but older devotees were being drawn closer to Prabhupāda by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. In the Sanskrit scriptures, the word upanīti means “coming closer to the spiritual master for the purpose of receiving more confidential instructions in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” Prabhupāda also took the opportunity of any meeting with his disciples to try to bring them closer to the Lord.

Nara-Nārāyaṇa: One of the most deeply impressive things that happened to me was the very first time I sat alone with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I had been with Śrīla Prabhupāda in San Francisco before in his room, but there were other people there, and I was a newcomer. But then I sat alone with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I was terribly fearful because I didn't know what to do, what to say. I was a little spaced out from all my karmic activities and was totally tense, like I was going to explode like a jack-in-the-box, because I didn't know what to do. I watched Śrīla Prabhupāda opening letters. He opened the envelope all the way out and saved it and used it later to write on in order to save paper. He showed me some letter from somewhere and asked my opinion. Then he asked me to get something from his cabinet, and I did.

His room was surrounded by windows, with light shining in from a very nice angle because of the way it was a little subterranean. The table was very low, just like a coffee table, and he was sitting behind it. I happened to be in the back against the wall, and he asked me to get something from one of his cabinets which was also behind there. So he and I both ended up behind his low table. He was standing and I was crouching. When I stood up, Śrīla Prabhupāda, out of the blue, began to talk to me. I was just so flabbergasted. Anytime he spoke to me, I became so disconcerted that I could hardly hear what he was saying. He pointed to the table.

He said, “You see this little ant?” I looked at the table and no ant was there. Prabhupāda was pointing his finger. He said, “Do you see that little ant?” I said, “Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda.” He said, “We should think that our goal should be how to make this ant Kṛṣṇa conscious.” I was just sort of blown away by what he said. He said, “We should go to this ant and we should lean down,” and Prabhupāda leaned down to the invisible ant on the table where he propped his forefinger and thumb together, poking toward the ant. “You should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.” And he said, “We should give a little prasādam. If we do that,” he said, “our whole movement will be a success.” I was completely impressed by the statement because I understood even though Śrīla Prabhupāda always had big schemes for a big world ISKCON, yet his heart was always lined with these small items, and this was so wonderful. If one person hears Hare Kṛṣṇa, then it is worth the whole effort.

Love for Śrīla Prabhupāda was also brought out by the prospect of separation from him. Govinda dāśī and her husband had been Prabhupāda's secretaries for a year. They had been with him wherever he went—from the West Coast, to Boston, to Montreal, to Santa Fe. They were always with him, like a part of his intimate family, and they had become very attached to being with him. But in his desire to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda sent Govinda dāśī's husband, Gaurasundara, to Hawaii before coming to Seattle, to open an ISKCON center there. In Seattle Prabhupāda asked Govinda dāśī to join her husband.

Govinda dāśī: If Prabhupāda said, “Very nice,” your life was perfect—whether he said it for your cooking capātis or peanuts, or doing a drawing, or a kīrtana, or anything. If he said, “Very nice,” and smiled and nodded his head, then your life's ambition was achieved, for that moment anyway. Getting him to smile, seeing him happy, was the goal of life, and you didn't really remember things

like liberation. It was almost as if the idea of going to a heavenly planet or even Kṛṣṇaloka became distant.

But at this time I knew that I was going to have to leave Śrīla Prabhupāda soon. I was so very, very attached to him that I would wake up in the middle of the night crying. Almost every night I would invariably be crying in my dreams or in my sleep because of having to leave him soon, and I didn't want to. It was a very painful time.

On one of his last evenings in Seattle, Prabhupāda gave a lecture at the temple as usual, and then he returned to his apartment. The devotees at the temple took hot milk and prepared themselves for rest. But suddenly Prabhupāda reentered the temple. It was very unusual. They offered obeisances and waited in keen anticipation. His mood was very grave. He again sat on the vyāsāsana and asked them to sit. He had his servant adjust the tape recorder and play a tape of Prabhupāda singing and playing the harmonium. Puzzled, the devotees looked at each other. For about thirty minutes, a beautiful bhajana of Prabhupāda singing the “Vande 'ham” prayers played in the room before the assembled devotees.

Afterwards, Prabhupāda said, “I have just received one telegram from India. The person who gave me sannyāsa has left his body.” Prabhupāda continued to explain.

“One has to accept the renounced order of life from another person who is in the renounced order,” he said. “I never thought that I shall accept the renounced order of life. In my family life, when I was in the midst of my wife and children, sometimes I was dreaming that my spiritual master was calling me and I was following him. When my dream was over, I was thinking I was a little horrified. “Oh, Guru Mahārāja wants me to become sannyāsī. How can I accept sannyāsa?’ At that time I was feeling not very much satisfaction that I have to give up my family and become a mendicant. At that time it was a horrible thing. Sometimes I was thinking, “No, I cannot take sannyāsa.’ But again I saw the same dream. So in this way, I was fortunate. My Guru Mahārāja”—here Prabhupāda's voice choked, and he became overwhelmed with emotion, “he pulled me out from this material life.” For moments Prabhupāda could not speak. Everyone present saw tears pour from his eyes, and then he spoke further. Although the occasion was the passing away of the person who awarded him sannyāsa, Prabhupāda was now speaking more of how his own spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, had called him and saved him and made him take sannyāsa through his sannyāsa-guru.

“I have not lost anything,” Prabhupāda said. “He was so kind upon me. I have gained. I left three children; I have now got three hundred children, so I am not loser. This is material conception. We think that we shall be loser by accepting Kṛṣṇa. Nobody is loser. I say from my practical experience. I was thinking that, How can I accept this renounced order of life? I cannot accept so much trouble. But I retired from my family life. I was sitting alone in Vṛndāvana, writing books. So this, my Godbrother, he insisted me, “Bhaktivedānta Prabhu.’ This title was given in my family life. It was offered to me by the Vaiṣṇava society. So he insisted. Not he insisted—practically my spiritual master insisted me through him, that you accept. Because without accepting the renounced order of life, nobody can become a preacher. So he wanted me to become a preacher. So he forced me through this Godbrother—“You accept.’ So unwillingly I accepted. And then I remembered that he wanted me to go to the Western country.

“So I am feeling now very obliged to my, this Godbrother, that he carried out the wish of my spiritual master and forced me to accept this sannyāsa order. So this Godbrother, His Holiness Keśava Mahārāja, is no more. He has entered Kṛṣṇa's abode. So I wish to pass a resolution of bereavement and send that. And I have composed one verse also in this connection in Sanskrit. So you all present, you sign this. I shall send it tomorrow.

“The verse I have composed, it is in Sanskrit. Vairāgya-vidyā-nija-bhakti-yoga. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness is vairāgya-vidyā. Vairāgya-vidyā means to become detestful to this material world. That is called vairāgya-vidyā. And that is possible simply by this bhakti-yoga. Vairāgya-vidyā nija-bhakti-yogam apāyayām mām. This is just like medicine. The child is afraid of taking medicine. That also I have experience. In my childhood, when I became ill I was very stubborn: “I won't accept any medicine.’ So my mother used to force medicine within my mouth with a spoon, I was so obstinate. So anyway, similarly I did not want to accept the sannyāsa order, but this Godbrother forced me, “You must.’ Apāyayām—he forcefully made me to drink this medicine. Anaviṣyum andham. Why I was unwilling? Anaviṣyum means unwilling. Andham means one who is blind, who cannot see his future. This spiritual life is the brightest future, but the materialist cannot see to it. But the Vaiṣṇavas, the spiritual master, they forcefully, “You drink this medicine.’ You see—apāyayām mām anaviṣyum andham śrī-keśava-bhakti-prajñānam.

“So this my Godbrother, his name is Keśava, Bhaktiprajña Keśava. Kṛpāmbudhi. So he did this favor upon me because he was an ocean of mercy. So we offer our obeisances to Vaiṣṇava kṛpāmbudhi. Vāñchā-kalpa-tarubhyaś ca kṛpā sindhubhya eva ca. The Vaiṣṇavas, the representatives of the Lord, they are so kind. They bring the ocean of mercy for distributing to the suffering humanity. Kṛpāmbudhir yas tam ahaṁ prapadye.

“So I am offering my respectful obeisances unto this, His Holiness, because he forcibly made me adopt the sannyāsa order. So he is no more in this world, he has entered Kṛṣṇa's abode. So I am offering my respectful obeisances along with my disciples. On the first day of my sannyāsa I never thought... But I remembered that I'll have to speak in English. I remember on that sannyāsa day when there was a reception. So I first of all spoke in English. So it is all arrangement of Kṛṣṇa, higher authority.

“We are writing like this: “Resolved that we the undersigned members and devotees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness Incorporated, in a meeting under the Presidency of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, today the 21st of October, 1968, at our Seattle branch, express our profound bereavement on hearing the passing away of His Divine Grace Oṁ Viṣṇupada Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Goswami Mahārāja, the sannyāsa guru, preceptor, of our spiritual master. And on October 6th, 1968, at his headquarter residence in Navadvīpa, West Bengal. We offer our respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of Śrī Śrīmad B. P. Keśava Goswami Mahārāja with the following verse composed on this occasion by our spiritual master.’ This verse I have already explained to you. So I wish that you all sign this, and I'll send it tomorrow by airmail. You have got pencil?”

Prabhupāda first signed his own name and then gave the letter to Kartikeya to take to each devotee in the room. One by one, they placed the paper on the floor and signed it. The devotee carrying the

paper was about to pass by several guests, but Prabhupāda said, "No, no. Everyone here is present, and so they are all a witness." The last one to sign was Prabhupāda's servant, Kartikeya. Kartikeya put the paper on the floor and slowly signed his name, while Śrīla Prabhupāda leaned forward on the vyāsāsana, watching very intently.

Before Prabhupāda left Seattle, most of the devotees returned to their temples in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Only half a dozen people remained with him for the few days before his departure. Prabhupāda had to go to Montreal for an interview with the U.S. consulate there. Accepted as an immigrant in Canada, he was now trying to get permanent residency for the U.S. Because of the expense, he would fly to Montreal unaccompanied. He planned to stay there a few days and then fly to visit the new ISKCON center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and then go back to Los Angeles.

Govinda dāsī made Prabhupāda his favorite food, kachaurīs, to take on the plane. Prabhupāda had taught her how to cook them. One of the secrets was to put the kachaurīs into hot ghee once so that they puffed up, but then cool them and recook them in the ghee. "Cook them twice," he said, "until it becomes reddish." As she cooked them, and while they were still hot, Prabhupāda wanted to try one. When he began asking for one after another, Govinda dāsī said, "Prabhupāda, you are going to eat them all, and you won't have any for your journey."

"Never mind," he replied. "Bring me more. Never mind my journey." According to Govinda dāsī, he ate eight kachaurīs, and she made more for his journey.

Jāhnava dāsī: The next day His Divine Grace was leaving for Montreal, so I was told to make the garland for him. I took too long and made it on thin thread. We were already late, but I made us even later in picking up His Divine Grace to take him to the airport. When we arrived at his apartment about one half-hour from the temple, Harṣarāṇī ran out of the apartment and told us that she had never seen him so furious. She warned us that we were "really going to get it" for being late. Then Govinda dāsī came out and confirmed what Harṣarāṇī said. Then Kartikeya came out, visibly shaken, followed by His Divine Grace. Instead of garlanding him, Upendra bowed down and with shaking hands held the garland above his bowed head. His Divine Grace simply put on the garland and, without a word of remonstrance, got into the van.

Nara-Nārāyaṇa: Bilvamaṅgalā didn't know how to drive; he was swaying this way and that way. And as we were going toward the downtown area, Prabhupāda said, "Who knows how to get to the airport?" We all looked at each other. Not one of us had ever been to the Seattle airport, and it was late for his plane. I said, "I think it is this way." Prabhupāda looked at me as sharply as a razor blade and said, "Think? 'Think' means you do not know." Finally there was an entrance onto the freeway, and I stopped there. Prabhupāda said, "I want to take a taxi. You do not know." He said heavier things than that, which my mind has blocked out. I stopped and said, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, let's wait a moment. Surely we will find a way." I quickly called out the window to a hitchhiker on the side of the freeway, "Where is the airport?" And he told us how to get there. Prabhupāda was angry, because he not only liked to be at the airport on time, but ahead of time by at least an hour. So we got on the freeway, and this boy obviously did not know how to drive. The car was swaying and rocking back and forth like a boat in a heavy storm, and Prabhupāda was looking disturbed. I was sitting in the back, and to make matters worse, every time the car swayed like that, the girls put

their hands together and started chanting tava kara-kamala-vare. We drove on, and by the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, we got to the airport a half hour ahead of the flight.

Jāhnava dāsī: When we got into the airport, His Divine Grace stepped through the front doors, and immediately his knee-length garland on the thin thread broke, but he simply cradled the two fallen ends in his arms and walked on with great dignity, his head held high and tilted back. Then the devotees gave me petals to throw at his feet. I thought that we would disturb the airlines by leaving petals everywhere. I threw the petals clumsily because I was distracted by my doubt, until His Divine Grace said, "That's all right, no more petals." Then when we sat waiting for his flight, I was pretty morose at his feet. He looked down and spoke that familiar blessing, "Is everything all right?" Then the devotees gave me a particularly exquisite and fragrant red rose to give to him. As he boarded the plane, he kept the rose and gave his garland to Upendra to distribute. Although I had only been a devotee for a month, still I, too, was faced with that unbearable separation from reciprocating with him in his physical form. His Divine Grace sat by the window, and he waved the long-stemmed rose slowly, and then he ducked out of view while we were dancing and having ecstatic kīrtana. Then he came back to the window and waved the rose and then ducked out of sight again. He did this several times, and we responded each time with more forceful chanting and dancing. Then he left.

October 27, 1968

Prabhupāda was traveling alone when he arrived in Chicago on a morning flight from Montreal. Inside the busy terminal building of O'Hare Airport, people rushed down the corridors or looked anxiously at the airport television screens overhead to find the right gate. Prabhupāda was to immediately catch a connecting flight to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Prabhupāda checked the overhead television screens for his flight's gate number and made his way down the crowded corridor. The rush and congestion made stopping even for a moment hazardous. As Prabhupāda headed down the long corridor, passersby eyed him curiously. He came to a flight of stairs and started quickly down them, moving with the crowd. Suddenly he tripped and lost his balance. He dropped his bag and fell down several stairs. He didn't get up. His hand was cut, and he felt pain in several places. Then a gentleman came, helped him stand, and handed him his bag. The stream of passengers continued to rush past while the gentleman waited, asking Prabhupāda if he was all right. Prabhupāda thanked the man and said that he would be able to proceed by himself.

On the plane for Santa Fe, Prabhupāda looked at his hand. The cut had bled a little but had now stopped, and he saw a bruise appearing.

When Prabhupāda arrived at the Montreal airport, a reporter had asked him, "Swami, in the course of your travels, what difficulties do you encounter?" And Prabhupāda had replied, "I have no difficulties. You have difficulties."

And it was a fact. Prabhupāda was simply depending on Kṛṣṇa, and so he had no problems. That had also been Prahlāda Mahārāja's prayer: "O best of the great personalities, I am not at all afraid of material existence, for wherever I stay I am fully absorbed in thoughts of Your glories and activities."

My concern is only for the fools and rascals who are making elaborate plans for material happiness and maintaining their families, societies and countries. I am simply concerned with love for them."

The reporter, however, had only written something foolish: "Hush-Puppied High Priest." A television news team, with cameras and lights, had come to the Seattle temple to interview Prabhupāda, and that night part of the interview had been televised. It had been favorable coverage. A Christian minister, however, a Mr. Miller from the University of Washington, had written in protest of Prabhupāda's preaching at the University. But Prabhupāda had replied that the Church had failed to satisfy so many boys and girls. So if some of them were following him and giving up sinful life, why should the Christians protest? They should be glad.

* * *

At the Albuquerque airport, Harināma, president of the Santa Fe temple, and Govinda dāsī met Prabhupāda. But they greeted him with strange news. "Prabhupāda," Govinda dāsī said, "the temple here has no money. You can't stay. You will have to go on to Los Angeles."

Prabhupāda turned to Harināma. "Why did you ask me to come here?" Harināma glanced at Govinda dāsī and then shifted his foot, which seemed to be causing him pain. He apologized and explained that the night before, he had been bitten by a black widow spider. But Prabhupāda's question was unanswered.

"So what are you going to do?" Prabhupāda demanded. "I can't go to Los Angeles tonight." He looked from Harināma to Govinda dāsī. "I must stay here in Albuquerque at least for the night in a hotel."

Govinda dāsī assigned herself to calling motels to find a suitable, reasonably priced room. While she was gone, Harināma found Prabhupāda a seat. "Govinda dāsī said you are not feeling well," Harināma said.

"Don't worry about my health," Prabhupāda said. "I am not a sick man. Govinda dāsī is sick. I am not sick. So what are you going to do?" Govinda dāsī returned and said she couldn't find any reasonable motels. Then she began to cry.

"You know Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda," she pleaded. "What does Kṛṣṇa want us to do?"

"That is not the point," Prabhupāda said angrily. "Kṛṣṇa wants to know what you want to do!"

Harināma, disgusted with Govinda dāsī's attitude, suddenly became decisive. "I think we should go to Santa Fe," he said. Prabhupāda agreed; it seemed the only thing to do. Getting into the temple Volkswagen at four in the afternoon, they started the sixty-mile drive from Albuquerque to Santa Fe. The clouds overhead formed unusual symmetrical patterns on either side of the road. "I have never seen the clouds so beautiful as today," Harināma said.

An hour and a half later, as they pulled into the driveway of the little storefront building, Prabhupāda noticed a handmade sign: "SWAMIJI IS COMING." "Yes," he said. And he smiled—his first expression of pleasure since arriving in New Mexico. "You were expecting me."

Coming in through the back door, Prabhupāda, escorted by Harināma, entered a newly painted room. A rug partially covered the linoleum floor, a wooden table was an altar, and a madras-covered crate with a pillow was Prabhupāda's seat. Prabhupāda, however, chose to sit on the rug instead of the crate, and the devotees and guests sat around him.

"This is a nice room," Prabhupāda said, looking around. "I will stay here."

Govinda dāsī brought Prabhupāda a plate of cut fruit, and Prabhupāda opened a lunch bag containing laḍḍu and kachaurīs. About eight guests (hippies) were present, and Prabhupāda distributed prasādam to everyone. One of the guests, never having tasted laḍḍu before, remarked, "This is the best peanut butter I've ever eaten."

"This is the preparation," Prabhupāda explained, "that the mothers make for Kṛṣṇa and the friends of Kṛṣṇa to take with them in their lunch bags. They put this in their lunch bags when they go and play." One of the guests asked Prabhupāda, "Who is Kṛṣṇa?"

"Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda replied, "is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is playing with the cowherd boys."

Prabhupāda asked to spend the night in the Santa Fe storefront, but the devotees told him that, as the heater was too loud, he would be more comfortable staying in an apartment nearby. He complied. Harināma assigned a recently initiated boy, Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa, to be Prabhupāda's servant.

When Prabhupāda got to his room and found it dark, Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa had to replace the burned-out bulb in the ceiling socket. When the light came on Prabhupāda looked around the room and found it practically bare. There was a mattress on the floor but no pillow. There was no desk, so Prabhupāda made his own desk by setting his books on his suitcase, a wooden chest a devotee in Seattle had built.

"So," Prabhupāda said, "do you know how to type?"

"No."

Prabhupāda was unable to sleep that night because of the glare from the streetlamp, so he sat at his desk writing purports for the verses of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As he wrote, his pen scratched with a hollow sound across the wooden suitcase. Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa took rest in another room, while Prabhupāda went on writing all night, his pen scratching on the hollow wooden desk. Then, at four in the morning, Prabhupāda rang the little bell Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa had left with him and called, "Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa."

Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa came running. "Yes, Prabhupāda?"

"It is four o'clock," Prabhupāda said. "You should get up." Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa had run to the door without his glasses, so he hurried back to get them. He then ran back again to Prabhupāda's room and sat down before him.

"The first thing," Prabhupāda said, "is you haven't paid your obeisances." Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa slapped his hand to his head, and Prabhupāda began to chuckle. As the boy put his head to the floor in honor of his spiritual master, Prabhupāda said, "That's all right. It is just for practice."

Then Prabhupāda spoke sternly. "Why have you brought me to Santa Fe and then told me to leave? Hmmm?" Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa, a devotee for only two months, didn't know what to say.

Prabhupāda persisted. "Why is this? Why have you done this?"

"Well... Govinda dāsī..."

"Govinda dāsī! Never listen to a woman!" Prabhupāda smiled as he spoke, but then again he sternly cautioned Toṣaṇa, "Don't laugh! So what did she say?"

"Well, she was concerned about your health—because of the altitude. She had talked with some doctors and friends of hers, and she became concerned that the altitude might affect you. As a matter of fact, she was sick herself. As soon as she got here, she became sick. So she convinced Harināma that they should tell you that you shouldn't stay here."

"Govinda dāsī will always be sick. She will be sick in heaven." Prabhupāda began laughing, but Toṣaṇa only looked back nervously. "So they think Swamiji will come here and die." Prabhupāda gestured towards the window. "There are so many people living here."

Toṣaṇa-kṛṣṇa: It became cold in the morning, so he told me to turn on all the burners on the stove. He rubbed his head and started singing the prayers to the spiritual master. He half-sang, half-said them, and when he was done, we both chanted japa together. I knew I was very fortunate. Then he had me do little things like turn off the burners on the stove—"Now you can turn one off. Now you can turn another one off." It was getting warmer. Later we went for an early-morning walk. I had nothing to ask Prabhupāda, since I knew so little of the philosophy. He was telling me that one's fortunate life begins when he meets a devotee.

That night about forty guests came to the temple—a big increase over the usual attendance. The audience was almost entirely young couples, and Prabhupāda talked about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in a way that seemed most fitting.

"Rādhārāṇī is the most beautiful girl," he said, "and Kṛṣṇa is the most beautiful boy." He explained that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are the perfection of the conjugal relationship, and when that same conjugal relationship is exhibited by the conditioned souls in the material world, it is only a perverted reflection.

After the lecture, as Prabhupāda spoke casually with the guests, an elderly woman introduced herself as the head of the Albuquerque Yoga Club and invited Prabhupāda to come there to speak.

Prabhupāda said he would be happy to come and, turning to Harināma, said, "We should go. They have invited me."

"But they already have another engagement for you in Los Angeles," Harināma replied. So Prabhupāda ended his short stay in Santa Fe after only one day.